

God in Us

Romans 8:1-17

Objective: To be assured of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

Focus: *verse 9 - You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if any does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*

1. What is the sinful nature? Where does it come from and where does it lead?
2. What is the Spirit nature? (see *Philippians 4:2-8*)

These two lives are going in diametrically opposite directions. The life that is dominated by the desires and activities of sinful human nature is on the way to death. In the most literal sense, there is not future in it—because it is getting further and further away from God. To allow the things of the world completely to dominate life is self extinction; it is spiritual suicide. By living it, a man is making himself totally unfit ever to stand in the presence of God he is hostile to him, resentful of his law and his control. God is not his friend by his enemy, and no man every won the last battle against him.

The Spirit-controlled life, the Christ-centered life, the God-focused life is daily coming nearer heaven even when it is still on earth. It is a life which is such a steady progress to God that the final transition of death is only a natural and inevitable stage on the way. It is like Enoch who walked with God and God took him. As the child said: “Enoch was a man who went on walks with God—and one day he didn’t come back.”

From *Romans* by William Barclay

3. What benefits mentioned in this passage give you the desire to be led by the Spirit?
4. How do we know we have the Spirit?
5. How can we set your mind on things above?
6. If we have asked the Spirit to lead us, but don’t feel His leading, what should we do?

The Spirit is thus the earthly presence of the glorified Lord. In the Spirit Christ becomes Lord of his Church, and in the Spirit the resurrected Lord acts both in the community and in the individual. The power of his resurrection is more than a power of ecstasy and miracle; it produces a new creation. The Spirit opens up for the believer the way to the saving action of God in Christ. He does this not as a magic power which man cannot resist; he creates the possibility of man’s replying with a responsible and conscious affirmative. He gives him, through the knowledge of the crucified Christ, the realization that in Jesus Christ God acted for him. The Spirit gives faith in the cross and resurrection of Christ and gives the power to live a life of faith. He is the “spirit of faith” (*II Cor. 4:13*; cf. *II Cor. 5:5,7*). The Spirit is not man’s own potential, but entirely the gift, the power and strength of God. The Holy Spirit, as *God’s* Spirit, must be distinguished from *man’s* own spirit, since he is the *Holy* Spirit, free from all sin. The Holy Spirit is always entirely God’s Spirit and is not absorbed into the individual spirit of man (cf. *Rom. 8:16*; *I Cor. 2:10 f*).

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At the same time, God's Spirit can win power and dominion over man, so that he becomes man's inner self, so that a man no longer lives by his own strength, but by God's (cf. *Rom. 8:9-15, 26f.*). In this way God's Spirit does not work, as in the Gnostic view, as an automatically divinizing substance. The Spirit is the power which creates faith, and the norm according to which the believer is constantly summoned to live: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." (*Gal. 5:25; cf 6:8*).

From *The Church* by Hans Kung

***THE BENEFITS OF A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE**

1. The Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth - *John 16:13*
2. The Holy Spirit will show us things to come - *John 16:13*
3. The Holy Spirit will teach us - *John 14:26*
4. The Holy Spirit will help us to pray - *John 14:12*
5. The Holy Spirit will glorify the Son through us - *John 16:14-15*
6. The Holy Spirit will be with us forever - *John 17:7*

This school of the Spirit set up and operating within, in the depths of the personality, where the total person is under the round-the-clock tutelage of the Spirit, makes other methods of producing maturity seem outward, mechanical, and amateurish.

Take Gnosticism. Salvation was to be gained by climbing the ladder of thirty-six steps to God by inward knowledge, but that knowledge or gnosis, did not include the body. This high knowledge was consistent with low morals. Gnosticism collapsed from that dualism—a house divided against itself that could not stand. A pillar of the church committed adultery. Brought before the judge, he was asked: "How could you, a pillar of the church, do this?" And the man replied: "Oh, the old Adam did that." And the judge replied: "Then I sentence the old Adam to nine months." That happened on a wide scale in regard to Gnosticism. Life said to it: "I sentence you to extinction because of your dualism."

Take modern psychiatry. It, too, undertakes to cure maladies of the personality through knowledge. Jung says psychiatry has four steps: confession, explanation, education, transformation. The two middle steps—explanation and education—are scarcely able to produce the last—transformation. It can produce alleviation, reformation, realignment, but hardly transformation.

If the school of the Spirit there are four steps: (1) confession, (2) self-and sin-surrender to God, the Spirit, (3) acceptance by faith of forgiveness and reconciliation to God, the Spirit, (4) transformation. For in confession everything is brought up and out—complete honesty; in self-and sin-surrender there is a transfer of the central allegiance wiping out of all barriers between the soul and God. Hence there is transformation. For God's power, now free to operate, transforms the honest, the surrendered, the receptive soul.

From *Christian Maturity* by E. Stanley Jones

Working Together

Ephesians 4:1-16

Objective: To show the purpose and benefits of the community of faith

Focus: *verse 16 - From Him the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

1. What blesses us most when we come to church? What hurts us when we come to church?

2. How should the church function (see *I Corinthians 12:12-26*)?

The essential part of the Christian message is the idea of salvation for the whole community of people, of which the individual is a member. Closely linked to the idea of the Christian's message is the outward which is at once a sign of grace and vocation for the individual and of his reception into the community of the people of God; baptism (cf. *Ehp. 4:1-5*). Since God's call precedes any action and any faith on the part of the individual, and since this call is addressed to the whole people of God, the individual never stands alone, but whining the community, just as the individual communities are part of the one community the Church. The Church begins, not with a pious individual, but with God.

From *The Church* by Hans Kung

3. Describe the functions for the following positions in relationship to the Church:
 - a. Apostles

 - b. Prophets

 - c. Evangelists

 - d. Pastors

 - e. Teachers

4. What is our function in the community of faith? How can we minister to others?

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Accompanying Mother Teresa, as we did, to these different activities for the purpose of filming them—to the Home for the Dying, to the lepers and unwanted children, I found I went through three phases. The first was horror mixed with pity, the second compassion, something I had never experienced before—an awareness that these dying and derelict men and women, these lepers with stumps instead of hands, these unwanted children, were not pitiable, repulsive or forlorn, but rather dear and delightful; as it might be, friends of long standing, brothers and sisters. How is it to be explained—the very heart and mystery of the Christian faith? To soothe those battered old heads, to grasp those poor stumps, to take in one's arms those children consigned to dustbins, because it is his head, as they are his stumps and his children, of whom he said that whosoever received one such child in his name received him.

From *Something Beautiful for God* by Malcolm Muggeridge

5. What does it mean to “speak the truth in love?” Can it be done?
6. How can we change to make our church more receptive towards others?

***The Community of Faith**

1. The place for relationships based on grace.
2. The place between the Cross and the Second Coming.
3. The place of joy and strength for the fellowship.
4. The place where Jesus brings together shepherds and wisemen, tax collectors and prostitutes, fishermen and philosophers, Jews and Gentiles, Men and women, rich and poor.

If Jesus Christ actually gave more time to preparing a community of disciples than to proclaiming the good news (which he did), then the contemporary church must also recognize the importance of community for proclamation. I would emphasize the priority of community in two directions: in relation to the individual believer and in relation to witness.

In the first place community is important for the individual believer. Mainline Protestantism, from its structures to its hymns and gospel songs, has emphasized the individual over the community. It has had a keen sense of the individual person's responsibility before God but little corresponding sense of the communal life of the Christian. Too often the Church has been seen more as a mere collection of saved souls than as a community of interacting personalities. Christian growth has been a matter of individual soul culture rather than the building of community of the Spirit. Saints who lived isolated, solitary lives were often placed on a pedestal above those whose lives were spent in true community. These tendencies, of course were part of Protestantism's pre-Reformation heritage.

But four biblical truths should call us back to the priority of community: (1) the concept of the people of God, (2) the model of Christ with his disciples, (3) the example of the early church, and (4) the explicit teachings of Jesus and the Apostles.

From *The Community of the King* by Howard A. Snyder

Personal Integrity

1 John 1:1-10

Objective: To show that light enable you to be honest about yourself, which results in fellowship with God.

Focus: *verse 7 - But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

1. Define the following terms:
 - a. Integrity

 - b. Honesty

 - c. Purity

 - d. Character

2. What does Scripture say we must do to maintain our integrity?

3. "God is light." From your experience and knowledge, list some facts about light.

4. How can we begin to walk in the light?

During my first four years as an active adult churchman I had taught two Sunday School classes, served on numerous committees and on the vestries of two churches. These were fine churches, filled with good, substantial people. But one of the constant sources of frustration was that in Sunday School classes, teachers meetings, committee meetings, and every vestry meetings in the church there was an amazing lack of basic honesty. It wasn't so much that people lied. We just had an unspoken agreement not to press the truth—when it seemed that the truth might hurt the leaders or someone else's feelings - or really rock the boat. We evidently felt that being honest in such cases would be cruel or tactless. Consequently we lived in a world of subtle duplicity of which we Christians were the contributing cause.

From *A Taste of New Wine* by Keith Miller

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5. How can we stay in the light?
 - a. *Psalm 24:3-6* Examining Our Hearts

 - b. *Psalm 37:3-6* Trusting in God

 - c. *Psalm 51:10-12* Confessing Our Sin

 - d. *Psalm 73:1-3;21-26* Relying on God

 - e. *Psalm 118:1-4* Giving Thanks

6. When we walk in the light, with whom do we have fellowship with?

7. Can we have fellowship with someone not waling in the light?

When we love according to the moral principles of our faith, those around us may respond in three possible ways. First, they may be so impressed by the example of our goodness, and so envious of the joy which it brings, that they want to join us and become like us. That is the response which we most earnestly desire. Second, they may be indifferent to us, because they are so bound up with their own selfish cares and concerns; although their eyes may perceive our way of life, their hearts are blind, so we are unable to stir them. Third, they may react against us, feeling threatened by our example and even angry with us; thus they will cling even more firmly to their material possessions and selfish ambitions, and slander us at every opportunity. Naturally, we dread this third type of reaction, because we want to live in peace with our neighbors, regardless of their personal beliefs and values. But if no reacts to us in this way, we must wonder whether we are truly fulfilling the commandments of Christ.

From *On Living Simply* by John Chrysostom

Often we want to be able to see into the future. We say, “How will next year be for me? Where will I be five or ten years from now?” There are no answers to these question. Mostly we have just enough light to see the next step: what we have to do in the coming hour or the following day. The art of loving is to enjoy what we can see and not complain about what remains in the dark. When we are able to take the next step with the trust that we will have enough light for the step that follows, we can walk through life with joy and be surprised at how far we go. Let’s rejoice in the little light we carry and not ask for the great beam that would take all shadows away.

From *Bread for the Journey* by Henri J.M. Nouwen

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True Faith

James 2:14-26

Objective: To show the importance of works as an evidence of true faith.

Focus: *verse 22 - You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.*

1. Define faith...What does it mean to have faith?
2. Where does our faith lead us? What is the goal of our faith (see *I Peter 1:8-9*)?

Man's will is crucial to faith. In a most precise sense man believes what he wants to believe. His intellect may be involved, but it is not primary. He may rationalize his belief—or unbelief—to justify it, but faith is not primarily a rational matter. Not that it is irrational...It is beyond reason. For example—here's man who says he can believe nothing that is not measurable therefore he has faith only in material things. Yet he believes in love—and love cannot be measured...He believes in joy and sorrow—and they cannot be measured. He trusts people without subjecting them to scientific tests and measuring their integrity. In fact, he lives by faith in a hundred little ways each day: faith in those who cook his food—faith in the one who promises to meet him for an appointment—faith in chairs upon which he unquestioningly puts his weight.

From *Manhood with Meaning* by Richard Halverson

3. What actions or works is the Apostle James suggesting?

List specific actions

- | | | |
|---------------------|----|----|
| A. Forgiving others | d. | g. |
| b. Loving others | e. | h. |
| c. Helping others | f. | i. |

4. Which is more important: faith or works?
5. Why is life of faith and works seldom an east one?

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There are four levels of human living—four possible ways we might try to live. The business of living is to know how to live. Many people know everything about life except how to live it. They fail at the vital place in life—the place of the art of living.

If you are living on the wrong level, with that level's pattern of life in your mind and outlook, it will be impossible ever to become mature. For in that case you are working on the wrong level with the wrong pattern. Carry out that pattern faithfully and zealously and yet it will land you in immaturity. You must be on the right level with the right pattern if you are to become a mature person.

The levels are these: (1) instinct, (2) duty, (3) faith, and (4) "faith working through love."

From *Christian Maturity* by E. Stanley Jones

6. What level of living are we at? How can we grow in faith? How can we grow in works?

Mother Teresa of Calcutta said, "Pray for me that I not loosen my grip on the hands of Jesus even under the guise of ministering to the poor." That is our first task: to grip on the hands of Jesus even under the guise of ministering to the poor." That is our first task: to grip the hands of Jesus with such tenacity that we are obliged to follow his lead, to seek first his Kingdom.

The [next] step is so simple I am almost embarrassed to mention it, and yet it is so important that I must. Begin now to obey him in every way you can.

From *Freedom of Simplicity* by Richard J. Foster

God gives the talent, but we must give the effort!

Take time to THINK, it is the source of power.
Take time to PLAY, it is the secret of youth.
Take time to WORK, it is the price of success.
Take time to PRAY, it is the greatest power on earth.
Take time to SERVE, it is the road to happiness.
Take time to LOVE, it is the way to God.
Take time to OBEY, it is the only way to please God.

Anonymous

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace!
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be
consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to
Eternal life.

St. Francis of Assisi

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Biblical Stewardship

II Corinthians 9

Objective: To live generously and faithfully

Focus: *Verse 6* - remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will reap generously.

1. Define the following terms:

a. Stewardship

b. Tithe

c. Offering

2. What are some wrong motivations for giving? What are the right ones?

3. How should we respond to wrong motivations? What should we do if we have wrong attitudes?

Supposing there is some old root—greed, lust, jealousy, or hate—that seems so ingrained in your very bones, in your very nervous system, in your very blood, that there is no way of getting it out. Then, lean back and let the Christ work a miracle.

When you recover from an illness is it because *you* do anything? No. all you do in to lie on the bed and rest, and the cleansing blood, continuously flowing through your veins, brings the healing...

Open your heart in absolute trust while this “purest and most precious blood in all history” brings you complete cleansing and healing. Open your soul while the love of Christ—“the acme of all spiritual love”—the love which has the power to save, and redeem the most hopeless of sinners—takes complete dominion over every area of your life. “Greater love hath not man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

From I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes by Glenn Clark

4. Where is our treasure? Be honest...

a. Priority #1 -

b. Priority #2 -

c. Priority #3 -

d. Priority #4 -

e. Priority #5 -

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When you are generous to another person, you are not bestowing a gift, but repaying a debt. Everything you possess materially comes from God, who created all things. And every spiritual and moral virtue you possess is through Divine grace. Thus you owe everything to God. More than that, God has given you his Son, to show you how to live: how to use your material possessions, and how to grow in moral and spiritual virtue. We may say that your material and spiritual possession cost God nothing; God created the universe in order to express his own glory. But the gift of his son was supremely costly, because his Son suffered and died for our sakes. The agony of Christ on the cross is the measure of how much God loves us. For this reason we should take none of our gifts—material or spiritual—for granted; day by day we should give thanks to God for what he has bestowed on us. Once this spirit of gratitude infuses us, we shall see generosity for what it is. When we help someone in need, we shall be saved from any temptation to take pride in our actions. On the contrary, we will regard our act as no more than a small token of appreciation for all that we have received—or, more precisely, the repayment of a tiny fraction of God's blessings.

From On Living Simply by John Chrysostom

5. How do we balance our time? Our money? Our energy? Our relationships?

6. How can we worship God in our stewardship?

God outside into a field. Ask yourself: "To whom does this field belong?" and you will reply to yourself: "It belongs to me" or "It belongs to so-and-so." Then ask yourself: "To whom has this field belonged in the past?" If you know the history of that field, a list of names will appear in your mind. Then you will realize how little ownership means. That field has seen countless generations of people claiming ownership of it. Countless generations of feet have trod on it, have plowed its soil, and have sown and harvested grain. If the field were sentient, do you think it would feel owned by the person who claims ownership merely as a visitor. That is the way we should always think of ourselves on this earth: we are merely visitors, here for a short span to learn virtue; then after that span we shall continue our journey toward the kingdom that lasts forever.

From On Living Simply by John Chrysostom

God is a god of abundance, not a god of scarcity. Jesus reveals to us God's abundance when he offers so much bread to the people that there are twelve large baskets with leftovers scraps (see *John 6:5-15*), and when he makes his disciples catch so many fish that their boat nearly sinks (see *Luke 5:1-7*). God doesn't give us just enough. God gives us more than we dared to ask for.

God is a generous giver, but we can only see and enjoy God's generosity when we love God with all of our hearts, minds, and strength. As long as we say, "I will love you, God, but first show me your generosity," we will remain distant from God and unable to experience what God truly wants to give us, which is life and life in abundance.

From Bread for the Journey by Henri J.M. Nouwen