

## WHERE WE ARE HEADED

How do we live out this new life that is ours in Jesus? Reading the New Testament, listening to Paul and the other authors, thinking through what we read, it becomes clear: We live out the Christian life in the power of the Spirit, through His influence and presence.

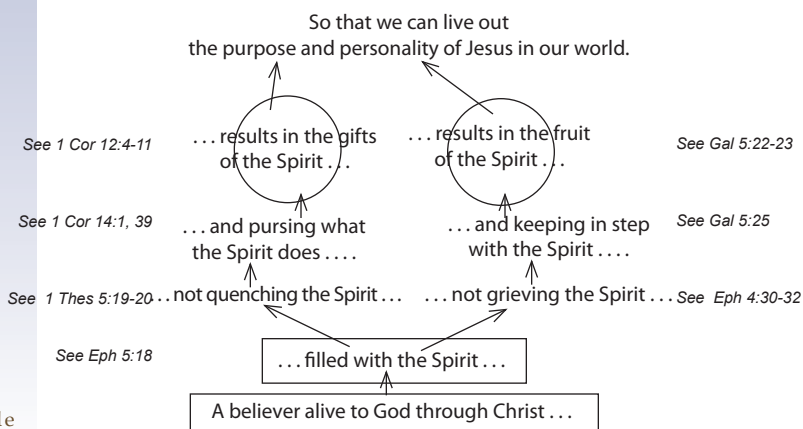
Paul touches on one dimension of this in writing to the Corinthians about spiritual gifts—a subject that leaves many Christians puzzled. This week, reflecting on the Sunday message that sought to answer some of the basic questions people have about the gifts, we want to think “big ideas” about the Spirit’s work in our lives.

## WALKING THROUGH THE DISCUSSION

It is unfortunate but many followers of Jesus end up losing sight of the “essential ingredient” to living the Christian life: the presence and power of the Spirit. Although there is tremendous value to things like Bible reading and study, fellowship with others, times of worship, apart from what the Spirit of God does in and through us in those places and times, there is little value. Do not be too hard on those who, in answering the opening question, focus on such things. But listen for what gets the accent . . . and notice what place, if any, the Spirit actually has. What we want for them to ultimately see is that, essentially, the lives we live are lives “of the Spirit.”

There are many places we could turn to explore this idea of lives “of the Spirit,” but in our journey through 1 Corinthians, we have most recently been discussing the gifts of the Spirit. We want to continue that discussion but do it by thinking a bit more broadly about the Spirit’s role in our lives.

Here’s a diagram that might help picture, in a synthesized way, life “in the Spirit” as written about by Paul: (The diagram works from the bottom up.)



In other words, as you reflect on the passage in 1 Corinthians, what is in view is the work of the Spirit in and through the lives of followers of Jesus where He produces in them the ministry of Jesus. The gifts of the Spirit are the kinds of things Jesus did in the incarnation (and continues to do through His followers!).

As you reflect on the passage in Galatians, what is in view is the work of the Spirit in and through the lives of followers of Jesus where He produces in them the character of Jesus. The fruit of the Spirit are the character qualities that we see in Jesus in the days of His incarnation (and they continue to be expressions of His life through the lives of His followers!).

The mission statement of Southside Fellowship actually reflects something of this “two-pronged” understanding of the Christian life. We want to be “a community of grace living out the purpose and personality of Jesus in our world.”

Anchored in the Gospel of grace that brings us into this new life, we long to live that out in such a way that Jesus’ purpose (as reflected in what He did) and His personality (as reflected in how He did things) can be seen in us. But such things cannot be manufactured naturally; they are a work of the Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit enable us to participate actively in Jesus’ purpose, doing the kinds of things He did. The fruit of the Spirit enable us to participate actively in the personality of Jesus, doing things the way He did. To fully live out this mission—and to live the way the New Testament pictures the Christian life—we need to be “fruitful” and “gift-ful” followers of Jesus, dependent on the Spirit.

In Ephesians 5:18, Paul offers something of a “baseline” call to Christians: Be filled with the Spirit. The idea? Allow the Spirit to dominate and fully influence you. What would happen in our lives if we lived more dependent, more yielded to, more reliant, more aware of the Spirit? The Scriptures lead us to believe that we would see more of His fruit and more of His gifts. (After all the “fruit” is “fruit of the Spirit” and the “gifts” are “manifestations of the Spirit.”)

Clearly, in this single discussion, you will not be able to unpack everything that could be said about the Spirit or answer all the questions that might arise. (Some of those additional questions will be addressed on Sunday mornings, some answers will develop as we continue through 1 Corinthians.)

What we want for our people is that they understand the role the Spirit plays in the Christian life, the value of being a follower of Jesus who longs for both the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit, and who see that the goal in all of this is so that we “grow up” to live like and look like the one who saved us—Jesus!

### INITIAL THOUGHTS

What do you really need in order to live the Christian life?  
What kinds of things shape and influence how you live out your life with Jesus?

### REFLECTING ON THE TEXT

The New Testament is filled with references to the Spirit and His role in our lives. Among other things, the Spirit:

- Can lead us (Romans 8:14)
- Can fill us (Ephesians 5:18)
- Can give us gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11)
- Can empower us to live holy (Romans 8:1-4)
- Can develop our Christ-like character (Galatians 5:22-23)
- Can help us in our praying (Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:26)

Let's just focus on two of the many dimensions of the Spirit's work in and for and through us as found in Paul's writings.

How does Paul describe what the Spirit does in our lives in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31?

What would it be like to be engaged in life with the Spirit the way it is described there?

How does Paul talk about what the Spirit does in our lives in Galatians 5:16-26?

What would it be like to be engaged in life with the Spirit the way it is described in that passage in Galatians?

### BUILDING BRIDGES INTO LIFE

Some Christians emphasize the gifts of the Spirit, some the fruit of the Spirit. Why do you think some emphasize one over the other?

What would it be like to live as a "fruitful, gifted, Spirit-empowered" Christian? Describe that kind of life.

Are you interested in such a life? If you are not experiencing all of what Paul describes, how could you better lean into what the Spirit wants to do in you?

*We will be looking at 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 and Galatians 5:16-26*

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