



Praise

- Read **Psalm 16:7-11**.

Care

Have each person choose one of the following for sharing about their past week:

- What are you thankful for this week?
- What difficulties did you face this week?
- What would you ask from Jesus to do for you this week?

Pray for each other's needs.

Celebrate Faithfulness

Encourage loving accountability to obey Jesus. by asking: "What are you celebrating in terms of mission? & What happened as you trusted God with your goals and 'I will by when' statements?"

Motivation and Encouragement

Cast vision for who they can become in Christ or what God can do through them.

John 16:7, 8 teaches us that the Holy Spirit is actively at work in the hearts of those around us. He is showing them their sin. He is creating a desire to be right with God. He is creating a longing to avoid the fear of death, which is eternal judgment. He is tearing down the objections of their minds and hearts. Our job is to fish for those people through witnessing, finding those whose hearts are ready. Let's encourage each other by reminding each other that the Spirit is already working before we even go. Sow broadly; all are on a spiritual journey!

Context

Read **John 14:16-21, 25, 26**. In the following text, Jesus used an illustration of a vine and its branches to help us understand our need to depend on Him and the Spirit that would come to live in us. Just like a branch produces fruit, because of the vine attached to it, our lives will be fruitful when we stay dependent on the Spirit. This happens as we submit in obedience to His ways, allowing His life to flow in and through us, so that we can bear fruit to the glory of God.

Read

- **John 15:1-11**.

Discovery Discussion

- What caught your attention and why?
- What can we learn about God or people?
- How can we live differently in light of this passage?

Retell the Story

- Read the story again and ask someone to tell the story.

Summary

Without Jesus, we cannot do anything. We can only have a fruitful life when we depend on and remain in Him. This happens as we submit in obedience to His ways, allowing his life to flow in and through us so that we can bear fruit for the glory of God. In other words, we need to let the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, direct and empower our lives by faith. Imagine what a community of people abiding in Christ would look like and could do in our city!

Preparing

- READ **Transferable Concept #4: [How to Walk in the Spirit](#)** and discuss with another group member. Text or email the link for the article to your group.

Pursuing

For Participants:

- Consider people from your [Oikos Network List](#) with whom you could tell this week's story or share about Jesus.
- Write "[I will by when](#)" statements and share with your small group.

Praying

- Commit everyone's goals to the Lord. Ask the Lord to help us be faithful and use us to start a movement of disciple-makers - to bear fruit through us.

In Your Time With God

- Review the principles of Spiritual Breathing from FBS #3, "[Keeping in Step with the Spirit](#)".
- Allow participants time to practice any skill or topic from previous lessons as needed.

How to Walk in the Spirit

Chuck leaned on the horn one more time, a long, angry blast. He'd already been waiting ten minutes. Where were they?

Marianne knew how nervous he was about this morning, his first Sunday teaching the fifth grade boys. He had *asked* her and the kids to be ready on time! Finally she arrived, opened the door and helped the 3-year-old into the car.

"I can't believe this," Chuck shouted as 6-year-old Julie cowered in the corner of the back seat. "I **told** you I had to be there early. I've got chairs to set up and materials to get ready!"

Marianne made a weak attempt to apologize as they pulled out of the driveway and headed—too fast—toward the church. Chuck ranted on with no consideration for his family's feelings ... until something deep inside him seemed to say, **You're in a fine state of mind to be teaching about God's love and patience, aren't you?** He recognized the "voice" in an instant. It spoke quietly in the midst of his anger and, as always, dove right to the heart of the matter. He could not argue; he knew the voice was right.

He glanced at his wife. Just seconds before, he had been so angry he had seen her as the enemy. Now what he saw was the woman he loved, staring sadly out the window as the houses slipped past beside them. He had wounded her deeply with his outburst.

"Honey," he said, reaching for her hand, "I owe you an apology." The rest of the trip, they spoke quietly together, mending hurt feelings, righting wrongs, restoring their communication.

Chuck had slipped back into the practices of the "carnal man" like all of us do at times. He had been so involved in the problem of the moment that he forgot who should be on the throne of his life. It is almost reflex to return to our carnal I'll-do-it-myself ways when we forget to believe the promises of God's Word (John 1:9) and their provisions for our daily living. We forget 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."

Paul says in Romans 14:23, "Whatever is not from faith is sin." It is not sin itself that returns us to the carnal state again; it is what we decide to do about that sin. If we stop breathing spiritually and allow sin to separate us from God and/or our belief in His power for our lives, our only choice is to live once again as carnal Christians. On the other hand, as we choose to breathe spiritually — confessing our sins to God moment by moment (exhaling), and breathing deeply of His forgiveness and restoration (inhaling) — we continue to keep Him enthroned and to live victorious lives.

As Chuck drove his family to church that Sunday morning, he "exhaled" when he confessed his sin to God and his family. And he "inhaled" a fresh filling of the Spirit as he opened his heart once again to God's restorative powers, and worked things through with his wife. When he stood before those fifth-grade boys, he was ready to speak to them with conviction of God's unconditional love for us as His redeemed children. The boys sensed in their teacher a humility and honesty that drew them to the Savior. And before class had finished, three of the

children had given their hearts to God. The Lord brings glory to Himself through the committed lives of His children.

As you "exhale" and "inhale" spiritually, you will notice a difference in your life. You will become "spiritually fit" and aware of a new freedom and power in your witness. When sin enters, do not let it set you back. Simply keep short accounts with God and do not allow sin to accumulate.

John writes, "My little children, I am telling you this so that you will stay away from sin. But *if you sin*, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. His name is Jesus Christ, the one who is all that is good and who pleases God completely" (1 John 2:1-6, The Living Bible).

As your relationship with the Holy Spirit matures, you will discover it is both critical and progressive. It is critical in that, as you continue appropriating His power moment by moment, you will learn how to appropriate by faith what He offers you. Your relationship is progressive in that, by faith, you will grow and mature in your Spirit-controlled walk. It is often easy to identify a believer who has walked in the Spirit for many years, because the fruit of the Spirit is easily seen.

The concept of "spiritual breathing" is not a complex one, but it needs to be understood in a broader context. There are four things we need to take precautions about in our Christian walk:

1. Being certain we are filled with the Holy Spirit.
2. Preparing for spiritual conflict.
3. Knowing our rights as children of God.
4. Living by faith.

Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

First, in order to walk in the Spirit, we must *be sure that we are filled with the Spirit*. In Ephesians 5:18, we are told, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (King James Version). To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be controlled and empowered by Him as a way of life. Jesus warned, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

There is a "throne" in each heart — our control center — and there is room on the throne for only one reigning power. The struggle within us is over control of that throne, and the Christian who is ruled by self has removed the Holy Spirit from the throne of his life.

It is imperative that we remember God's *command* to us and His *promise*. He commands us, "Be filled." He promises that if we ask anything according to God's will, He will hear and answer (1 John 5:14,15). Because He commands us to be filled with His Holy Spirit, we can be sure that we are asking something that is in His will for our lives. And when we pray according to His will, He has promised to answer our requests. Therefore, we can *expect* Him to fill and empower us when we sincerely desire to surrender the control of our lives to Him, and *trust* Him to fill us with His Spirit. Then we must continue to breathe spiritually, "exhaling" by confessing and "inhaling" by appropriating His forgiveness and power in our lives by *faith*.

What about emotions in the experience of the believer? Feelings add color and excitement and are a valuable part of life,

but they are extremely fickle, changing with the weather. As Christians, we live by *faith*, trusting in God's trustworthiness and the promises of His Word. If we depend on feelings for a confirmation of His working in our lives, we put ourselves in a dangerous position and will almost always be disappointed.

Let's compare the process of believing God and living the Christian life to a train. The power is in the engine (FACT), the fuel is in the coal car (FAITH), and bringing up the rear is the caboose (FEELINGS). No engineer would couple his train to a caboose and expect it to pull the load. The engine — fact — gives Christianity its power, and often *feelings* follow naturally, as a bonus. But if they are not there, it does not mean the *facts* have changed.

Refuse to seek emotional experiences as proof of the Holy Spirit's indwelling. If you have a sincere hunger and thirst for God's righteousness, and you have confessed your sin, surrendered to His control, and asked Him to fill you, you can be assured that *you are filled with the Holy Spirit!* God is faithful to His promises.

John 14:21 reminds us, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him." It does not say, "He who *feels love* for me," but, "He who *keeps my commandments*."

Feelings usually follow the decisions and actions of our lives, but we need not look for them nor depend on them to confirm fact for us. Looking for an emotional experience is denial of the concept of faith, and whatever is not of faith is sin (Hebrews 11:6). When we believe God, He honors our faith, and we can live life with assurance that He is filling us moment by moment.

Be Ready for Spiritual Conflict

Second, as all good soldiers who are prepared for battle, we must *be ready for spiritual conflict*. We, who have chosen to become spiritually alive and committed to our Lord, must *expect resistance from the enemy*. And one of the enemy's sharpest weapons is guilt. He will poke and prod when we least expect it, with stinging nettles that itch and swell. He will accuse us of sins for which we have already accepted God's forgiveness, and he will do everything possible to destroy our security in Christ, for the enemy knows that a doubting soldier is worthless in battle. The good news is that we have a choice:

- Do not allow Satan to sink arrows into his target. A "moving target" is always harder to hit.
- Refuse to withdraw into *unnecessary introspection* (one of Satan's favorite ploys). This will prevent you from probing into areas that have *already been forgiven and forgotten* by the Savior!
- Confess to God only what the Holy Spirit impresses upon your heart as something which is standing between you and His complete filling of your cleansed heart.

We are told in 1 Peter 5:7,8 to let God have all of our worries and cares, for He is always thinking about us and watching everything that concerns us. We are to be careful — alert to inevitable attacks from Satan, the great enemy, who prowls about the earth like a cunning lion looking for his next victim to tear apart. He is a shrewd and merciless foe, attacking either subtly or obviously, attempting to defeat and destroy us. But we

can be confident that "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Two thousand years ago, Satan was defeated when Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins. Victory is ours *now!* We do not look forward to victory but backward, toward the cross where the enemy was defeated once and for all. We need not fear Satan as long as we walk in the Spirit and depend on Christ for our strength and provision.

Know Your Rights as Children of God

Third, if we are to walk consistently in the Spirit, we must *know what our rights are as children of God* (John 1:12). We have inherited an inexhaustible supply of love, power, forgiveness and grace from our Father. It is our responsibility to learn how to draw upon that supply.

The source book which declares our rights of inheritance is, of course, the Bible. As believers, we need to spend time reading, studying, memorizing and meditating on God's Word to live in a way that will please Him. The desires of His heart for us, His precious children, are hidden in the Scriptures. As we search for these truths, they are revealed to us by the Holy Spirit Himself.

For example, when Christ takes up residence in our lives, our bodies become His living temples. Jesus promised us His special power to live holy lives (Romans 12: 1,2). As His children, this is something we've inherited.

We also can be effective witnesses for Him. When His Spirit controls us, we are filled with His love for the lost. And as we share truth with them, He speaks through us.

One word of caution: We must be careful not to think of Bible study, prayer and witnessing as "works" that justify our position in Christ. In truth, it is just the opposite. The works we do in the name of our Lord are the *results* of living to please the Savior. And the results are *evidence* of a lifetime given to the moment-by-moment filling of the Holy Spirit.

Live by Faith

The fourth area of walking in the Spirit is *living by faith*. It is sad to see the pain of sincere Christians who have been deceived by a displaced emphasis on emotions. When unrealistic expectations are levied by others who have set their own standards of proof for the Spirit, there can be nothing but disappointment ahead. Praise God, we do not live by fluctuating feelings, but by faith in His never-changing Word! And His Word is not silent on the issue of faith. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that "without faith it is *impossible* to please Him." Galatians 3:11 reminds us that we "live by *faith*."

Faith requires believing when it is not easy to do so. But God has given us a lifeline to hold tight to when things are rough. Romans 8:28 promises us that "all things ... work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

It is not easy to learn to say, "Thank you, Lord," when your heart is breaking, but it is a priceless addition to the Christian walk. Writer Joseph Bayly, who has lost three sons in death over the years, has said that God was never closer than when he and his wife walked away from a fresh grave.

Praise and thanksgiving are gifts expressing our trust in God in the midst of overwhelming circumstances. Have you lost a loved one to death? Has pain and disease seemed to control your body? Have you received hurts you did not

