



# FIRST STEPS

STUDIES TO BEGIN YOUR WALK WITH CHRIST  
By Marlon Furtado

## *“Significance of the Holy Spirit”*

# IMPORTANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In another lesson we discovered that our old sinful nature still resides within us, and that it is at war against our new nature. **Galatians 5:17** says, *“For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”* We also learned that we can take the *offensive* measure of obeying God’s Word and the *defensive* action of fleeing temptation to win this battle. But in my experience, it is not quite that simple. In fact, there is a daily struggle to obey God and every believer in every generation can testify to this battle within. One moment we can praise God with our whole heart, and the next we can be plotting how we will disobey Him. Even the great Apostle Paul experienced this fight within his soul. He shares it in **Romans 7:15-25**.

*“I do not understand what I do. **For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.** And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. **For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.** Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: **When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.** For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but **I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.** What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.”*

## POWER IS NEEDED TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

If it were only a matter of knowing what to do, then certainly Paul, as well as Christians all over the world, would be walking in constant victory over temptation. But just carrying a Bible under my arm and knowing what I *should* do does not ensure victory. I need the power to carry out God’s will. If this power source is missing, then my life is like a car without gas. It might look fine on the outside, but it isn't very useful.

This is a vital lesson — one that every follower of Christ must come to learn — the Christian life is a *supernatural* life. And this is one of the hardest lessons to learn, that growing as a Christian is not measured by how hard you try or how disciplined you force yourself to be. Discipline and the development of habits will be important, but they are not the guarantee of victory over temptation.

Too many believers make the mistake of thinking that while their salvation is a free gift, God will leave them to struggle on their own power to follow Him and become disciples of Jesus Christ. This was the thinking among some of the Christians in the churches scattered throughout the area of Asia Minor in Paul’s day. The apostle corrects them by asking a pointed question in **Galatians 3:3**.

*“Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?”*

## THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE PRESENCE OF JESUS

There is only one person who has ever successfully lived the Christian life, and that was Jesus Christ. It is only as you allow Jesus to live His life *through* you, that you will enjoy greater victory over sin. That’s what this chapter is all about, how to let Jesus live through you by the Holy Spirit.

You and I need a power beyond our own strength to faithfully carry out God's will. This, in fact, is what Jesus shared with His disciples on the night before His crucifixion. His words are recorded in **John 16:7**. *"But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away."* What?! Wait a minute! How could Jesus ever consider leaving them to be for their *good*, something beneficial? It will make sense once we read the rest of the verse, *"But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."*

Who is this Counselor that Jesus said would be to our advantage to have replace the personal presence of Jesus? Earlier that night in **John 14:26** Jesus identified the Counselor as the Holy Spirit. *"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."*

The meaning of the word Counselor is one who is called alongside to help. Jesus informed His disciples that after He returned to Heaven, the Holy Spirit would come to "help" us. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was active, but He did not indwell them like He does Christians today. Now that Jesus has ascended back into heaven, the Holy Spirit resides *in* Christians. That is huge. That's why Jesus said it would be to their advantage that He went away. While Jesus was alive here on earth, He could only be in one place at one time. But now that the Holy Spirit indwells us, each of us can experience the personal presence of Jesus 24 hours a day, whether we are in America, China, India, Africa, or anywhere else on the globe. Now, that is an *advantage!*

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS VITAL FOR VICTORIOUS LIVING**

The Spirit of God is the One who enables us to live the new life of following Jesus. Look at Paul's statement in **Romans 8:1-4**. *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit."*

- **THE PROBLEM:**

The Law refers to the regulations and commands of the Old Testament. The Law was not able to accomplish what it intended because my sinful nature was too weak. Therefore, I was the problem. For example, the Law told me to always honor my parents. While that is a very good command, because of the pride of my heart I often dishonored my parents as I was growing up. It wasn't that the command was bad, nor were my parents the issue. My sinful heart was the real problem.

- **THE SOLUTION:**

The Spirit of God has set me free from the law of sin which always results in death.

Here is an illustration to help us understand. Let's say that I was commanded to cross the Atlantic Ocean and arrive in France. I could try swimming, but the law of gravity would be too strong for me. I would drown. The law of gravity represents the law of sin and death. It is constantly trying to pull me down and drown me. However, if I board a plane, it will free me from sure death and enable me to accomplish the command to go to France.

In the same way, the Spirit enables me to overcome bad habits and attitudes, and to obey God with my whole heart.

## THE SPIRIT IS VITAL FOR SHARING THE GOSPEL

Jesus commanded the disciples to wait until the Spirit arrived before they tried to take the message about Him to the world. Just before His ascension to heaven Jesus said in **Luke 24:49**, "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." He repeated this same idea in **Acts 1:8**, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

You don't have to wait like they did. You immediately received the Holy Spirit the moment you placed your trust in Jesus. You are equipped by the Holy Spirit to be His witness wherever you go.

We are not able to convict a lost person of their need for Jesus. But this is exactly what the Spirit of God is able to do. **John 16:8** says, "When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment." As we share the gospel in dependence upon the Spirit, He takes the Word of God and drives conviction into the heart of the person.

## CAN I KNOW FOR SURE THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS LIVING IN ME?

We learned in lesson 3 that we were marked with the Holy Spirit and sealed by Him at the moment of our conversion. We also saw that we received the Holy Spirit as a down payment to secure our salvation. Yet, you will hear some Christians teaching that you must pray and wait on God in order to get the Holy Spirit. But let's look at a few verses from the Bible.

**Romans 8:9** "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

**Romans 8:15** "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"

**1 Corinthians 3:16** "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?"

**1 Corinthians 12:7** "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

### Fruit of the Spirit

But there also should be *evidence* of His presence. There should be an authentic love for Jesus. There should also be changes in our character. The Bible speaks of these as *fruit*. When you see an orange hanging on a tree limb, you know it's an orange tree. When you see an apple, you know it's an apple tree. In the same way, the *fruit of the Spirit* identifies the Christian. The kinds of fruit He produces is spelled out in **Galatians 5:22-23**:

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."*

When you begin to see these changes in your life, it gives you assurance that you have the Holy Spirit.

### Filled with the Spirit

We are also commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit. **Ephesians 5:18** says, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." There are a variety of opinions on what it means to be filled, but a couple of illustrations that help me are:

1. When there is dirty sediment in the bottom of a glass, you can clean it out by constantly running clean water into the glass. As the clean water continually *fills* the glass it will eventually push out the dirt. As we obey the Bible the Holy Spirit does His work of cleaning us up and purifying our lives.
2. A sailboat makes very little progress if there is no wind. Even if there is wind, progress is haphazard if the sails don't catch the wind. But if the sails are *filled* then the boat moves powerfully under the guidance of a skilled captain. In the same way, as we obey the Bible the Holy Spirit will fill our sails and help us to make progress in the Christian life.

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT USES THE BIBLE TO CHANGE US**

It's not enough to have the desire for God to work in your life, just as it's not enough to have the desire for someone to build you a house. You need to give the contractor the tools to get the job done. So the Spirit of God needs the tools to do His work. There is a very special tool that the Holy Spirit uses. It is identified in **Ephesians 6:17**, "*Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*"

**James 1:25** "*But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom [refers to the Bible], and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.*"

The Bible is the Holy Spirit's **weapon**. With it He can battle against the temptations that seek to trip us up, whether they come from the world and the devil or arise from our own sin nature. The Bible is the means by which the Holy Spirit points out the areas of our lives that need to come under submission to the Lord. That is why we put such a great emphasis upon the Scriptures.

## **LET'S OPEN YOUR BIBLE**

Look up these references and answer the questions.

**Genesis 1:2**      What does it say the Spirit of God was doing at the very beginning of Creation?

**1 Peter 1:11**      What did the Holy Spirit reveal to the Old Testament prophets?

**2 Peter 1:20-21**      What part did the Holy Spirit play in the inspiration of the Bible?

**1 Timothy 4:1**      What does the Spirit of God warn us about the future?

**1 Corinthians 2:11-14**      What does the Spirit of God enable Christians to do?