



Session 3: Life in the Spirit



Transformation of our spiritual lives begins when we allow the Holy Spirit to flow within us.

Jesus talked about the Spirit flowing through his people like a river. When you allow the Spirit to flow in you, you are given power to become the person God created you to be.

Previous session review

- Recap on your experience of the previous challenge. How did it go? Was it helpful?
- If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question: Where and how did you experience God last week?

Read

Read the passage several times through, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. At the end of the text you will find helpful background information in our 'Setting the Scene' section.

As you read, look out for shockers and blockers.

Shockers – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

Blockers – something from the text that raises questions for you.

Romans 8.1–17

There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit, which brings us life in union with Christ Jesus, has set me free from the law of sin and death. What the Law could not do, because human nature was weak, God did. He condemned sin in human nature by sending his own Son, who came with a nature like our sinful nature, to do away with sin. God did this so that the righteous demands of the Law might be fully satisfied in us who live according to the Spirit, and not according to human nature. Those who live as their human nature tells them to, have their minds controlled by what human nature wants. Those who live as the Spirit tells them to, have their minds controlled by what the Spirit wants. To be controlled by human nature results in death; to be controlled by the Spirit results in life and peace. And so people become enemies of God when they are controlled by their human nature; for they do not obey God's law, and in fact they cannot obey it. Those who obey their human nature cannot please God.

But you do not live as your human nature tells you to; instead, you live as the Spirit tells you to – if, in fact, God's Spirit lives in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ lives in you, the Spirit is life for you because you have been put right with God, even though your bodies are going to die because of sin. If the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from death, lives in you, then he who raised Christ from death will also give life to your mortal bodies by the presence of his Spirit in you.

So then, my friends, we have an obligation, but it is not to live as our human nature wants us to. For if you live according to your human nature, you are going to die; but if by the Spirit you put to death your sinful actions, you

Setting the scene:

- Rome at this time was the capital of an empire that stretched from Britain to Arabia. It was wealthy, cosmopolitan and the diplomatic and trading centre of the known world. There were pockets of Christians – a mix of Jews and Gentiles.
- Romans is Paul's 'Gospel manifesto' containing the fullest statement of basic Christian truths. The great theme here is 'faith in Christ – our only way to relationship with God.' Jesus has paid for our sin and now offers us new life with the added power of the Spirit.
- Paul was a Roman citizen and a Jew – he took the law seriously. But only Christ can free us from the burden and difficult demands of the law.
- The Holy Spirit is alive and active in all who belong to Christ – enabling a transformation of the heart to live as God's adopted children. A foretaste of glory and a living hope within us!

will live. Those who are led by God's Spirit are God's children. For the Spirit that God has given you does not make you slaves and cause you to be afraid; instead, the Spirit makes you God's children, and by the Spirit's power we cry out to God, "Father! my Father!" God's Spirit joins himself to our spirits to declare that we are God's children. Since we are his children, we will possess the blessings he keeps for his people, and we will also possess with Christ what God has kept for him; for if we share Christ's suffering, we will also share his glory.

Good News Bible

Reflect

After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.

Begin your reflection time by each naming your shockers and blockers. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.

You might also like to explore these questions:

Q1. Do you picture the Spirit like a river or fire? What other imagery is helpful?

Q2. For Paul the Spirit is active and alive in those who belong to God – how have you experienced the Holy Spirit?

Respond

Life in the Spirit challenge: As a group create a challenge that will help you to grow in your experience and understanding of the Spirit this week or choose one of the following:

Challenge ideas:

1. Flow

Paul writes about 'keeping in step with the Spirit' or 'walking in the Spirit'. As we go about our everyday lives we will either allow the Spirit to flow in us, or we will do things that quench its flow. This week intentionally live with an openness to allow the Spirit to flow through you. Indicators of the Spirit at work in you might include gratitude, contentment and an ability to resist sin. Look out for times when you sense you have quenched the Spirit – perhaps you experience in yourself a sense of greed, irritability or superiority. In these times come to God and ask for his grace. God always encourages the heart of those who sincerely want to be more like him. Use a journal to record your reflections of living in the flow of the Spirit this week.

2. Back to Life

This week do something that makes you feel truly alive. It might be reading a great book, mountain biking, a long walk in the countryside or talking with friends over a glass of wine. Eric Liddell said that he 'felt God's pleasure when he ran'. Engage in an activity that feeds your soul and draws you near to God – let yourself take time to sense this. You might like to keep in mind the words of Psalm 51.10 as you partake in this activity.

3. Submission

Surrendering ourselves to God is the key to allowing the Spirit to work through us. Choose one day this week where you live intentionally to serve others. This is not a licence for others to walk all over you! But this day, you choose to set aside your own desires and wants in order to place others' interests above your own. Seek to love God as you respect, serve and love other people through this day and allow his Spirit to work through you.

'If a river flows, life flourishes. If a river dries up, life dies. So it is with you and the Spirit.'

John Ortberg,
The Me I Want To Be

Group Prayer

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group this week as you look to keep in step with the Spirit and allow him to flow through your life.