



## LESSON 3

# Living in the Spirit

# 1 How has your understanding of the Holy Spirit deepened so far in this study?

## Introduction

We are not alone in our spiritual battles—Jesus promised that the Father would send us the Holy Spirit. He specifically referred to the Spirit as the *Paraclete* or Advocate, which literally means “he who is called to one’s side.” This Greek word refers to the legal terminology for a defense attorney, but can also mean spokesperson, mediator, consoler, helper and comforter. All these meanings paint a fuller picture of the way the Holy Spirit helps us in our spiritual growth. The theme of this lesson, *Living in the Spirit*, is about living the Christian life daily and consistently, assisted and empowered by the Paraclete—the Holy Spirit.

## Our Helper

### 2 Read Galatians 5:16-25. What is happening in Galatians 5:16-17?

*Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

*By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.***

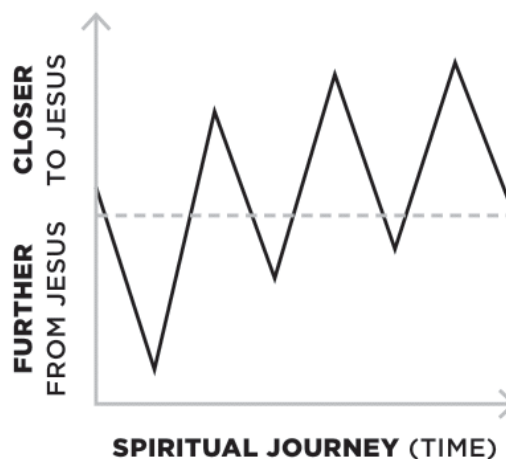
### 3 Look carefully at how Paul speaks about the Holy Spirit. What phrases help us understand how the Holy Spirit acts and helps us?

## The Zigzag Illustration

The *Zigzag Illustration* is a visual representation of the spiritual life. It can be used as an image of what we have read in Galatians 5.

The vertical side of the graph shows the degree to which our lives are in conformity with the will of God. This axis points toward a spiritual lifestyle of growing in intimacy with the Lord. By moving down the graph, we progressively distance ourselves from God, and fall into sin. The horizontal axis indicates time.

### 4 What kind of spiritual journey does this first zigzag represent?



This zigzag could represent *two* kinds of spiritual experiences.

**Example 1**—This could be a fairly faithful, average Christian who experiences growth as well as struggles, temptations and sin. Having not committed mortal sin, this person remains in a relationship with Christ. However, they give in—perhaps regularly—to a variety of venial sins (e.g. gossip, crude language, critical attitude, lack of prayer and Scripture reading, selfishness, envious thoughts, overlooking people who need them). *Sloth* (spiritual laziness) may leave this person unaware of venial sins.

**Example 2**—This person’s spiritual life is often shifting from spiritual highs to lows, perhaps resulting in serious backsliding or mortal sin.

*The graph applies to both examples.* It shows a person who takes a significant amount of time to rekindle intimacy with God and to continue spiritual growth. People in this pattern might slip spiritually and not get back on track until they attend a conference or retreat. Guilt or ignorance of remedies to the problem may keep them away from God for long periods of time.

For people in Example 1, this “getting back on track” may come about through motivation at a retreat or in prayer. They become more diligent in following the Lord, repenting and changing their actions and attitudes.

For people in Example 2, this “getting back on track” will likely be a bigger, more momentous repentance and conversion because of how far and for how long they have fallen away from the Lord. They sincerely repent and go to the sacrament of Reconciliation to make a fresh start.

Both these cases represent spiritual lives full of struggles that might be avoided by a change of lifestyle.



# Consistency

The quicker we repent and turn to the Holy Spirit for help, the less difficult it will be to continue moving forward in our spiritual growth. The grace we receive empowers us to live according to the Spirit.

**6 Galatians 5:25 tells us, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.” The word *live* implies walking in the Spirit in an ongoing and consistent way. Why do you think this is an important principle?**

Of course, you can stay the way you are—your level of commitment to the spiritual life is up to you. There is, however, a danger involved: we need a healthy concern about not losing our faith altogether. Scripture warns us not to be complacent. For example, Revelation 3:15-16 warns us about being lukewarm, and Philippians 2:12 instructs us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Matthew 7:21 says, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”

**7 Read Luke 11:13. How do we know we can ask for the Holy Spirit’s help on a moment’s notice?**

*If you, with all your sins, know how to give your children good things, how much more will the heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to those who ask him?*

# Live by the Spirit

Let's pull together the points developed in the past two lessons.

In our attempts to follow God, we can encounter a variety of setbacks, where our weaknesses and sin lead us to do things we regret. We can feel distanced from God. This up-and-down spiritual life is not uncommon and it underscores our constant need for God's help. The Holy Spirit, as the Paraclete, assists, comforts and comes alongside us as we strive to follow God. In Scripture, this life in the Spirit is described as walking in the Spirit and being guided by the Spirit, implying an ongoing and consistent life with him. It is the Holy Spirit who works out, in us, our ongoing conversion and helps us to keep Jesus at the centre of our lives.

Two key words will help us to stay in a Christ-centred relationship and live by the Spirit: *choose* and *ask*.

**8** How does the word *choose* apply to our ongoing conversion and life in the Spirit?

**9** How does the word *ask* apply to our ongoing conversion and life in the Spirit?

# Summary

The Holy Spirit as Paraclete is our helper. We cannot continue to grow in a Christ-centred relationship without his help. Otherwise, we experience unfulfilling, frustrating, guilt-ridden, up-and-down spiritual lives. We are invited to walk in the Spirit continually, choosing to turn to him for help in any and all circumstances.

## Living It Out

### **CHALLENGE**

This week, remember the choose and ask model several times throughout your day to live by the Spirit.

### **MEMORIZE LUKE 11:13**

*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*