

MIDDLE BAPTIST BIBLE STUDY

Growing in the New Life
Walking in The Spirit

Knowing how to grow in the *new life* is essential. The old adage is ever true: “Sin will keep you from God’s Word, and God’s Word will keep you from sin.”

No factor in Christian growth is more important than prayer. Prayer must be defined as talking and listening to God. We talk to Him with our lips and heart, and He talks to us through His will and Word. It involves a two-way conversation. Spiritual maturity is impossible without systematic prayer.

Worship is essential also in spiritual growth. Worship involves honor and respect toward God, the ceremony of private and public worship, and joyful service of Christians to their Lord. Christians who submit to the lordship of Christ in reverence and service will grow in their spiritual lives.

The Bible describes Christian life as “[walking] in the Spirit” (**Galatians 5:16**). Walking best represents the step-by-step character of the spiritual life. Living by the Spirit’s power is a moment-by-moment yielding to the Spirit’s will and control. The evidence that we are walking in the Spirit is simply the display of the fruit of the Spirit (**Gal. 5:22, 23**). Walking in the Spirit involves *confession of sin, yielding to God, and being filled with or controlled by the Spirit*.

We have just completed a ten-week study on the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control). The study touched briefly on the Spirit Life: “Let Us Keep in Step with the Spirit.” Let’s take a deeper dive into what it takes to “walk” in the Spirit—confession of sin, yielding to God, and being filled with or controlled by the Spirit.

1. Walking in the Spirit: Confession of Sin (Psalm 73:1).

An important prerequisite to walking in the Spirit is the confession of sin. Sin must be confessed in order to restore fellowship and to continue receiving God’s power (**1 John 1:5-10**). **Psalm 73:1** speaks of God being good to Israel, even to those that have a clean (pure, **NLT**) heart.

- a. Confession means that we agree with God about our sin. This involves much more than simply acknowledging the sin. Confession requires an attitude of sorrow for the sin and a willingness to turn from it. It does not mean that we will never commit the same sin again, but it does mean that the attitude of repentance is present (See **Psalm 32:5; 34:18; 51:17**).
- b. Repentance or Repent, comes from the Greek word, *mentanoeo*, which literally means to perceive afterwards, as to change the mind (seat of moral reflection). In the New Testament, the subject chiefly has reference to repentance from sin, and this change of mind involves both a turning from sin **and** a turning to God. The parable of the prodigal son is an outstanding illustration of this (**Luke 15**). (Vine’s Expository Dictionary, Nelson Printing)

MIDDLE BAPTIST BIBLE STUDY

- c. Confession should be made at the moment the Christian becomes aware of sin. Apart from this rule, moreover, the Scriptures mention two specific times for confession: before the close of the day (**Eph. 4:26**) and before the Lord's Supper is observed (**1 Cor. 11:27-32**). Failure to do the latter is a special cause for discipline from the Lord.
- d. Confession of sin should normally involve only those who have knowledge of the sin. This means that private sins should be confessed privately (**1 John 1:9**); sins between individuals confessed between those involved (**Matt. 5:23, 24**); and public sins confessed publicly (**Matt. 18:17**). Public confession normally is made for the edification of the church (**1 Cor. 14:26**).
- e. **Psalm 51** is one of the most remarkable chapters in the Old Testament. This Psalm contains the actual words of confession uttered by King David after his great sin of adultery and murder. This prayer (confession) can serve as a pattern to the Christian when he is guilty of sin in his life.
 - i. David freely admits his sin (**Ps. 51:3-4**). This honesty is vital to confession. God will graciously forgive all our sins, but not on account of our excuses.
 - ii. He then displays real sorrow over his sin. Paul writes in **2 Cor. 7:10**, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to repented of (no regrets, **AMP**); but the sorrow of the world worketh death (**Ps. 51: 17**).
 - iii. He asks for God's forgiveness (**Ps. 51:1, 7-9**).
 - iv. He believes that God has heard him and will restore him (**Ps. 51:12-15**).
- f. In the New Testament the most important single verse concerning confession is **1 John 1:9**. In essence John tells us the means of forgiveness and cleansing is the blood of Christ, while the method of this forgiveness and cleansing is the confession of the Christian.

2. Walking in the Spirit: Yielding (Romans 12:1).

Confession of sin in itself is not enough to enable the believers to automatically walk in the Spirit. He must then become a yielded instrument for God's service. To yield means to: give way to arguments, demands, or pressures; to relinquish possession of something or to give up something; to give right of way to another. Other words for yield: to surrender, part with, hand over, turn over, to submit.

- a. What is to be yielded is simply oneself (**Rom. 6:13; James 4:7**). This involves both the body (**Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:20**) and the mind (**Rom. 12:2**), since it is with the body the actions conceived in the mind are carried out and with the mind that they are formulated. Stated another way, that which is conceived in the mind is carried out in the body; thus, one's whole being must be presented by a decisive act of the will to God for His service. Yielding must not be thought of as simply as a willingness to do some specific thing. Rather, it consists of dedication by a person to do whatever God commands.
- b. Yielding leads not only to dedication but also can result in separation: "And be not conformed to this world" (**Rom. 12:2**). Since the world is resolutely opposed to God, one cannot revel in its

MIDDLE BAPTIST BIBLE STUDY

lusts and at the same time do the will of God (**1 John 2:15-17**). The same word translated “conformed” here is translated “fashioning” in **1 Peter 1:14**. So the concept of separation involves being “unfashioned” in spirit, thought, values, and actions, according to the world’s standards.

- c. Finally, yielding includes *transformation* of the mind. This work is said to be accomplished through a lifetime of “renewing” the mind. Man’s mind has been darkened by sin (**Rom. 8:7; Col. 1:21**) and must be brought to the place where it thinks as God thinks (**Eph. 4:23**). This renewing is said to come especially through prayer to God in everything (**Phil. 4:6-7**) and through constant *meditation* on the Word of God (**Ps. 119:1**).
- d. This transformation is a lifelong process that will not be completed until we are with Christ (**Phil. 1:6; 1 John 3:2**). Along life’s way, however, it brings a peace and delight that can only come from having embraced the mind of Christ (**Phil. 2:5**).

3. Walking in the Spirit: Filling (Ephesians 5:18).

To be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the Spirit and is, therefore, crucial to successfully living the Christian life.

- a. Unlike the indwelling of the Spirit, filling is a repeated experience. This is underscored by the use of the present tense (“be filled”) as well as by biblical examples of Christians who were filled more than once (**Acts 2:4; 4:31**). Just as important, we must observe that filling is a command to be obeyed, not an option.
- b. The next most important question is “how can someone be filled with the Spirit”? The prerequisites are simply confession of sin and yielding to God. The former means to agree with God about a person’s sin, the latter means primarily dedication of himself to God. As the believer chooses to obey in these areas, he is filled with the Spirit and enabled to manifest Christlike character. The obedience may be accompanied by prayer but is not necessarily so.
- c. The certainty of being filled with the Spirit may be confirmed by the believer’s faith and life. The believer must, of course, believe God’s Word that meeting the conditions will result in the filling. The Spirit-filled person will exhibit the Christlike character described in **Galatians 5:22,23** as the fruit of the Spirit. Included in that list are all the vibrant, attractive qualities desired by all Christians. How delightful it is that any Christian may possess them and be transformed by the filling of the Spirit.