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Life in the Spirit

TRANSFORMED
BY GOD

PART 1





LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Transformed by God

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I think it would be fair to say that for many people, calling 2021 a difficult and disappointing year would be a significant understatement. Part of the reason - at least for me personally, and maybe for many of us - is that what took place this past year had very little resemblance to what we had desired or expected. So, how do we live life in the spirit with all this uncertainty?

In this Christmas season, we celebrate the birth of Jesus - And while the image of the baby in the manger evokes warm fuzzy feelings, the reason Jesus came empowers us to overcome our inability to be better people on our own, when his Spirit comes alive within us.

Paul Tripp wrote,

“There simply is no sin or spiritual need that the life, death and resurrection of that baby in the manger would not address.”

Jesus came to dwell among us - to show us what the Christian life truly looks like - and then he overcame the power of sin and death so that we can actually live out the life of love that he did.

Tim Keller adds,

“God’s salvation does not come in response to a changed life. A changed life comes in response to the salvation, offered as a free gift.”



Within the book of Romans, Paul spends the first 11 chapters developing a deep theological argument showing how the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ provides an invitation into the family of God and life in the Spirit to all - Jews and Gentiles alike - and, as Ben Witherington III writes, *we're on equal footing in grace and in disgrace.*

Paul expresses the amazing love God has for humanity - and all that he has done to rescue and redeem us - and that God shows no favoritism - that Christ came to level the playing field

Chapter 12 turns the argument toward how we are to respond to the amazing grace and love of God, displayed in the person of Jesus Christ. Verse 1 points us to recognize that when we truly understand the depth of God's mercy, our ONLY reasonable response is to offer ourselves back to him.

How can we help each other live in the Spirit?


1. **Talk about Jesus** – remind each other of his goodness and greatness and love – and what worshipping God truly means.

"We give ourselves to God as his sacrifices when we understand his grace and its place in our lives...We offer ourselves intelligently and willingly" - Douglas Moo

2. **Do not conform to the pattern of this world**

The Bible warns us that there's an enemy at work - that seems to relentlessly try to mess with the good things that God is up to in the world and in our lives.

Life in the Spirit leads us to become more dependent on God. We all depend on the mercy and grace of God for our salvation and our adoption into his family.



The church is described as a **Mosaic** - *a bunch of broken pieces gathered together by God and made into something beautiful.*

Don't let me grow comfortable in patterns of behavior that don't line up with Jesus way of doing life. Living in the Spirit takes intentionality and effort on our part.

Galatians 5:17, *"the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want"*

As we learn to live in the Spirit, our lives will look *more* like Christ and *less* like the pattern of the world around us. (See Galatians 5:17-23 for a more explicit description of the contrast. And Romans 12:9-21 expands on Galatians 5:22-23).

3. Remind one another how beautiful the "fruits of the Spirit look"

In Galatians 5, Paul contrasts that with this beautiful description of what life in the Spirit looks like where he says, BUT, the fruit of the Spirit is *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

4. Remind each other to let Jesus lead me - and not the other way around.

I have heard the analogy that life in the Spirit is like a dance. You may not know this but I am NOT an accomplished dancer in any way. However, I am under the impression that when 2 people are dancing, one leads and the other follows.

I also can reasonably assume that while the follower is learning the rhythms and steps, it may be awkward and toes may be stepped on.

In *our dance with Jesus*, when we come to trust him as an *amazing leader*, who actually knows the dance intricately, as we continue to practice *following*, the dance becomes more beautiful. When the follower tries to lead - things go awry.

5. Life in COMMUNITY

While the world around us may be promoting competition, independence OR isolation, we are instructed that God's model isn't about self-made people intended to function independently but rather part of a body.

Verses 3-8 lead us toward learning to live in the Spirit - in community - which is how we represent the body of Christ.

REFLECT ON THIS...

1. What gifts do we have to contribute to the body?
2. How can we value those, or encourage others in their gifts?

3. Who can we invite in our lives to encourage us in areas we may struggle in?

4. Who can we be encouraging to?

"For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member *belongs* to all the others. We have different *gifts*, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying (declaring God's words), then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it *cheerfully*."

- Romans 12:4-8

As we step into 2022, this is what is going to attract our friends, our neighborhoods, and weary world so desperately in need of the hope that only comes from Jesus. We get to help people see what it means to get along with one another. Ben Witherington III uses the phrase, "*Unity in the midst of diversity*" and encourages us to embrace that what we share in common as Christians (followers of Christ) should distinguish us from others more than our differences should divide us from each other.

Let's commit to encouraging one another to get to know Jesus better and live out his life of love, empowered by his Spirit to carry out his mission and purposes - **TOGETHER.**

