

Life Principles Center

Term 3: Being a True Disciple of Christ

Course C: Life in the Spirit

Lesson 1: The Holy Spirit: Reproducing Christlike Character

Part 1 (MC110)

Introduction

In this course, entitled “Life in the Spirit,” I want to share with you what the Bible has to say about the Spirit-filled life. Together, we will examine the character of Christ as expressed through His indwelling Holy Spirit. We will also learn about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and how God calls us to use them in ministry. My friend, it is essential that we live the life God has called us to live so that the work He has called us to do will be fruitful and effective. I pray that this course gives you deep insight into what it really means to live the Christian life.

Lesson 1, Section 1

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 1, you should be able to:

- A. Evaluate the spiritual outgrowth of your relationship with Jesus Christ.
- B. Distinguish between outward ministry and the inner work of the Holy Spirit.
- C. Memorize Galatians 5:22-23.

Scripture

Read Galatians 5:22-25

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Lesson 1

As we enter into this focus on *Life in the Spirit*, let me begin by asking you a question: *Is there anything in your life that would cause an unbeliever to notice something different about you? Could someone point at you and without question say, “Now, there is a Christian!”?*

When we think about our place in the world, there is something within us that separates us from unbelievers. As we have seen throughout

this study, we as believers have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives. If we are living in the Spirit by growing in our Christian walks, then the Spirit within us will begin to bear spiritual fruit in our lives. In a real sense, that fruit will be our shining testimony in a darkened world.

J1: Take a moment to consider the outgrowth of your relationship with Jesus Christ. Have others given any indication that your life has impacted theirs in an eternal way? Do they sense your joy and peace? Have they come to you for advice because they know you are trustworthy? Give specific examples of ways in which God has glorified Himself by working through your life to reveal His characteristics to others.

In his letter to the Galatian Christians, Paul identified the specific fruit of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are qualities that are often downplayed in contemporary society. One reason for this is that each of these requires true biblical humility, or a sober self-realization of our place and of God's control.

Q1: Memorize Galatians 5:22-23. True or False? The fruit of the Spirit includes only love, joy, peace, kindness, gentleness, and self-control.

These are not simple traits that we can earn or strive for. Rather, this is the result of the Spirit's presence in our lives. And, if this fruit is not evident in our lives, then it will be almost impossible for people to even notice our faith in God. No matter what we may say about God, our actions *always* speak louder. If our works do not match up with our words, then the things we actively do for the Lord can become meaningless and fruitless.

J2: Consider this case scenario. Mary is a 35-year-old mother of two who is actively involved in several church outreaches and in ministry at her child's school. However, her family is often neglected, and she easily becomes impatient when friends ask for her advice. What is the difference between organized ministry and the ministry that comes through the Spirit's working in Mary's life? What might be hindering Mary's desire to be a light in the world?

Lesson 1, Section 2

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 1, you should be able to:

- A. Identify two different expressions of spiritual fruit.
- B. Evaluate scriptural accounts about the fruit of the Spirit.

Jesus knew that His disciples would not be able to live a life of faith under their own power. That is why He instructed them to delay their ministry a little while, until they were given the gift of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). What was true for the disciples then is still true for us today. Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, we cannot live the life that God has called us to live.

Think about the apostle Peter. He walked with Christ throughout His entire three-year ministry on earth. Peter heard Jesus' sermons, he saw the Lord heal the sick, and He enjoyed an intimate personal friendship with the Son. Then, when Jesus predicted his betrayal and denial by His friends, Peter exclaimed, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" (Luke 22:33).

Peter made that profession out of his own strength. He was too proud to think that he might one day fail his Lord. However, that very night, Peter denied even knowing Jesus three times. (Luke 22:54-62)

Q2: Re-read Luke 22:33 and 54-62. Contrast Peter's behavior with his behavior in Acts 2:22-41. What difference does the Holy Spirit make in Peter's life?

- A. *He wavered in his understanding of eternal security.*
- B. *The fruit of the Spirit's working in Peter to preach was what led many to receive the Gospel.*
- C. *Peter became a bold and passionate witness.*
- D. *None of the above*
- E. *Both B and C*

In Luke 22:33, Peter is relying on his own strength, and he was sure he would succeed. However, when the time came, he found that his strength was terribly insufficient. (Luke 22:54-62) Certainly this was on Peter's mind later, when the Lord instructed him to hold off on his ministry until he was "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). When that "power" came to them, Peter was transformed into a bolder, more dynamic person. He went from cowering in the dark to preaching a controversial, radical sermon to the leaders of Jerusalem. (Acts 2)

Several times throughout the gospels, Jesus demonstrates the great importance of fruit in the lives of His disciples. In His eyes, spiritual fruit is not a possibility or an ideal; it is the very mark of believers. (Matthew 7:15-20; Matthew 12:33; John 15:16)

J3: Read the following Scriptures and discuss what they say about the importance of spiritual fruit in the life of the disciple of Christ: Matthew 7:15-20, Matthew 12:33, and John 15:16.

A difficult lesson for disciples is that our spiritual fruit can come in two forms: fruit of activity and fruit of attitude. Activity, obviously, notes the things that we *do*, the works we do for the Lord. While these can be wonderful things, we cannot always trust our actions. Jesus Himself warned about the error of placing too much confidence in our actions in Matthew 7:21-23.

The fruit of attitude, however, is a much better indication of what is happening in our spirits. You see, as the Holy Spirit works in our lives, His fruit is manifested first in our attitudes. As we come under the influence of His love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, our inward attitudes will begin to affect our outward behavior. The change comes from within, as the Holy Spirit modifies our attitudes. This inner attitude transformation is squarely in line with the very definition of repentance: *a change of mind that results in a change of behavior.*

When we give the Holy Spirit free reign in our lives and focus on our growth in Him, we will begin to notice changes in our thoughts and deeds. It is as though when we are filled with the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit is simply the natural outflow of what is happening within our hearts. At that time, we cannot help but show the world the Spirit within us.

This does not mean that we will always succeed. Will I be able to love everyone at every moment? Will I always be joyful? No, I won't. Our momentary shortcomings do not make us spiritual failures. Remember, we are still living in a dark and sinful world, and our spirits are always engaged in battle with those outside influences. However, when we begin to emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit by listening to God's leading and applying His Word, we will begin an unprecedented time of growth and maturity that will result in a complete change of our personalities and priorities.

In the next lesson of this course, we will continue this discussion by seeing how the fruit of the Spirit is reproduced in us as we cooperate with

the influence of the Holy Spirit. Then, we will look at some practical ways in which we can begin to harvest the crop of spiritual fruit that God desires for us.

Prayer

Father, we thank You and we praise You for the wonderful gift of Your Holy Spirit. We know that we cannot live the Christian life on our own. We can succeed in Your work only by allowing the Spirit of God to live that life through us. Forgive us for our pride that often gets in the way, and give us the strength and confidence to allow Your Spirit to begin to produce a mighty crop of spiritual fruit. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory:

The Scripture memory assignment for this course is given below. Be sure to commit this passage to memory before moving on to the next lesson. Then, practice reciting it over and over throughout this course.

Galatians 5:22-23

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

Assignment

True or False? Our actions are the only means of reproducing the spiritual fruit of Jesus Christ in our lives.

Life Principles Center

Course: Life in the Spirit

T3_CC_L2: The Holy Spirit: Reproducing Christlike Character

Part 2 (MC110)

Introduction: Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson. This lesson is structured with two separate sections to help you maximize your study time.

Lesson 2, Section 1

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 2, you should be able to:

- A. Recognize the key to living the Spirit-filled life that characterizes Christ.
- B. Understand the method of producing spiritual fruit and its application in your own life.

Scripture

Read John 15:1-8

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

Lesson 2

In the last lesson of this course, we saw that the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives brings about certain changes in our attitudes and

actions. Today, I want you to see that the fruit of the Spirit is reproduced in us as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

What do we mean by “cooperating” with the Holy Spirit? This simply refers to our trust and reliance upon the Spirit to work in and through us. You see, **we cannot produce spiritual fruit without the work of the Spirit, and it is certainly God’s will for us to be fruitful.** In John 15:1, Jesus describes the Father as a vinedresser. Why would a vinedresser plant a vineyard if he were not expecting a crop of grapes? So, we can trust that fruitfulness is God’s goal for us.

Q1: True or False? Because it is God’s desire for our lives to produce spiritual fruit, we should strive for it on our own, hoping that our lives will yield such crops.

Second, verses 2 and 8 show the progression even further. According to verse 2, God will take away any branch that is not producing fruit; and, He will prune every branch that is producing, so that even more fruit can grow. Verse 8 shows us the result of this fruitful way of life: bringing glory to God by showing proof that we are His children.

God’s act of pruning alarms many believers. Do we mean that God will bring in some trial or test even when we are being obedient and faithful to Him? That is exactly what this passage means. You see, sometimes, especially when we are experiencing success in our Christian lives, we become complacent. In those times, it often takes a shock or a hardship to get our attention and move us into an even more fruitful and productive season.

When God acts to prune us, He takes out His knife and begins to cut things away. Now, this may hurt a bit, but we have to carefully understand what He is up to. He is not killing the vine. He is actually removing those things that weaken or limit the production of fruit. When the pruning season is over, the result will be a healthier, richer crop of fruit. This results in bringing glory to God and in a dynamic testimony that catches the attention of those around us.

Now, if spiritual fruit is God’s goal for us, how do we go about attaining it? **We become fruitful when we submit our very lives to the will of the Holy Spirit and allow Jesus to live the Christian life in and through us.** When we accepted Jesus into our hearts, we were forever bound to Him.

John 15:4-7 makes this point abundantly clear. We can only find success and growth in our Christian walks when we make it our ambition

to abide—or remain—firmly planted in Christ Jesus. Think about the illustration Jesus makes in this passage. He says that He is the vine and that we are the branches. Literally, the branches and the vine in a vineyard exist in perfect harmony. The sap—the very life of the tree—flows freely through the vine and into the branch. The result of this union is the production of ripe fruit.

J1: Carefully read John 15:5. How does this Scripture verse relate to the truth that unless we submit every area of our lives to the Lordship of Christ, our life will not reach the fruit-producing potential that God desires?

Q2: True or False? Spiritual fruit is attained by our attempt to produce it with works that exhibit joy and peace to others.

When a branch is severed from the vine, the result is only death. The branch cannot exist, let alone thrive, when separated from the vine. In the same way, a Christian cannot produce spiritual fruit when separated from the very source of life—Jesus Christ. I cannot stress this point enough: **your very life is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit.**

So, you see, it is impossible for you or I to live out the Christian life. When we try to do it on our own, or apart from Christ, we experience only loss, failure, and death. God’s way for us to become fruitful is to allow the Holy Spirit to enter into our hearts, change us from the inside-out, thereby reproducing Christlike character within us.

J2: Have you ever experienced a season in your Christian walk when you kept adding more good things to your life—Bible studies, ministries, outreaches, etc.—yet saw diminishing fruit? Having learned about how Christlike character is produced in us, what new insights have you discovered in relation to the fruit of the Spirit in your life?

Lesson 2, Section 2

Objective: At the end of this section of Lesson 2, you should be able to:

- A. Understand and apply practical ways to see the fruit of Christ revealed in your life.

Keeping in mind all we have studied so far, let us spend a few minutes looking at some practical ways we can become successful in producing fruit. **First, in order to bear fruit we must be in the vine.** Obviously, we cannot be fruitful if we are cut off from the source of life. When we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, Scripture says that we are eternally grafted into the vine, and nothing can pull us away. (Romans 8:35-39)

Second, fruit cannot grow where there is not a free flow of life-giving sap. For Christians, this flow of life is the Holy Spirit. When we sin against the Lord, we begin to quench or block the flow of the Spirit. This does not mean that the life of Christ is no longer in us; rather, it means that the flow of the Spirit is not what it should be because we have chosen to disobey God. Whenever we sin against God, the quality of our fruit will be lessened.

Third, the fruitful Christian is one who has completely yielded to the Holy Spirit. How do we yield to the Spirit? We do this by surrendering our pride and human desires to Him and allowing Him to work in our hearts and attitudes. For example, if someone were to verbally attack you in public, embarrassing you in front of your friends and family, how would you respond? Would you immediately give way to your human nature and retaliate, or would you humbly ask the Holy Spirit to change your attitude and produce a Christlike response within you?

You may think, “Well, that sounds good, but it won’t work in real life.” Yes it does.

Q2: What are three essentials of yielding maximum spiritual fruit from your life? Choose ONE response that best answers the question.

- A. Must be a believer, must be working to make yourself better, must be spending time with God.*
- B. Must be a believer, must be in right standing with God, must give every part of your life to God..*
- C. Must be a believer.*
- D. Must try to apply the Bible to your life.*
- E. All of the above*
- F. None of the above*

This is the fruit of the Spirit, the supernatural Person of the Trinity living within us. When we rely on Him to live the Christlike life through us, we will find ourselves responding to circumstances in ways that we have never responded before. You’ll discover that you are able to love those

who hurt you, and that you can still have joy no matter how someone treats you. Love and joy are parts of the fruit of the Spirit; it does not depend on how anyone else acts, but rather on the Holy Spirit within you.

You see, all the things that you and I may or may not do is not Jesus' chief concern. He is far more concerned with whether or not the Holy Spirit is reproducing the very qualities of the Savior within us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This fruit is the mark of the Christian. It is what Jesus is looking for, and it is what we must show to the world. It is possible that you may be the only Christian someone ever meets. If that were the case, would that person be able to see a clear image of Christ in you? This is only possible through the power, presence, and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, reproducing the character of Christ within us.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we love You and praise You for making it so simple for us. We would like to make it complex. It makes us feel better, but You've made it simple so that any one of us could live by faith, moment by moment, day by day, trusting in the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to do in and through us what we'll never be able to do for ourselves.

Thank You for Your forgiveness for all our failures; and we know for certain that there will be failures in the future. Thank You for Your forgiveness. But thank You also for the maturity. Thank You that we are growing, and thank You that the fruit is becoming more and more healthy, there's more of it. And we pray that the Holy Spirit would so work in each one of our hearts that any one of our unbelieving friends could point to us and say to their unbelieving friend, "There is one for sure." This is my prayer in Christ's name, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

Galatians 5:22-23

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

One of the three essentials to producing Christlike character involves surrendering every area of your life to Him. Spend some time in prayer, and record in your journal any areas God highlights that are not currently being surrendered to His control.

Life Principles Center

Course: Life in the Spirit

T3_CC_L3: The Holy Spirit: Giver of Gifts (MC180)

Introduction: This lesson is divided into two sections to help you complete the entire lesson at your convenience. In order to renew your mind with God's Word and give you an accurate view of Him, it's very important that you take time to complete each assignment before moving on to the next lesson.

Lesson 3, Section 1

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 1, you should be able to:

- A. Explain Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:7.
- B. Distinguish between spiritual gifts and the fruit of the Spirit.
- C. Understand the scriptural evidence surrounding the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

Lesson 3

We have spent the last two lessons of this course examining a crucial part of our Christian walks: the spiritual fruit that is evident in our lives. Now, we will move into a related area: spiritual gifts. It is important that we develop a solid understanding about these gifts, because they are given to us for a specific purpose. When we fail to use our spiritual gifts in

the Lord's service, then we are guilty of grossly misusing what He has entrusted to us.

Most likely, not many of us would make a conscious decision to refuse to do what God calls us to do. So, then, why do we often fail to serve Him when He calls upon us? I think that the primary reason is our own feelings of inadequacy. We may argue, "Well, God, I couldn't do that. I'm not strong enough. Surely there is someone else who would do a better job."

Does this describe your response when God gives you a specific job? My friend, throughout *Faith Foundations*, you have seen over and over again that it is simply impossible for us to live the Christian life on our own. It is only possible when we allow the Holy Spirit of God to live out the Christlike life within us. When we talk about spiritual gifts, we must realize that God has given us everything we need to be successful men and women of God.

Sadly, many Christians do not feel comfortable talking about spiritual gifts. Some of the gifts, such as speaking in tongues or the gift of healing, have caused so much controversy in some churches that many believers have simply ignored the whole issue of spiritual gifts altogether. I want to be very clear here: we cannot ignore spiritual gifts and maintain a right relationship with God. For Bible-believing Christians seeking an obedient walk with the Lord, overlooking such an important part of Scripture is simply not an option.

As we explore spiritual gifts, we must begin by clarifying some terms. **First, we need to see the difference between the *gift* of the Holy Spirit and the *spiritual gifts* we receive from the Holy Spirit.** Essentially, the gift of the Holy Spirit refers to our receiving the indwelling Holy Spirit into our lives at the moment of our salvation experience. (Acts 2:4, 38) When you accepted Jesus as Lord, you were given the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is active and alive within you at this very moment.

Second, we need to understand the difference between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. As we have seen already, the fruit of the Spirit refers primarily to the Christlike qualities and character of a believer. Our spiritual fruit is the evidence of the Holy Spirit's work within our lives to mold us more and more into the image of Jesus. (Romans 8:28-29)

Third, there is a difference between spiritual gifts and our natural talents. Every man and woman is born with certain talents and

abilities. These are certainly gifts from God. However, they are different from spiritual gifts.

Now, when we talk about *spiritual gifts*, we are referring to those things mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. These are the special abilities given to us by the Holy Spirit in order that we may carry out the ministries that God has given us. As we will see later, this is certainly not restricted to those few men and women that hold the title of “minister.” We see in the sixth and eleventh verses of 1 Corinthians 12 that God has given these gifts to *every* believer. We are all gifted by the Spirit, and we each have a ministry—or work—appointed to us by God.

Q1: True or False? The difference between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit is that fruit reveals God’s work in our lives and extends His character qualities through us, and spiritual gifts are special abilities of the Holy Spirit used for the purpose of carrying out the work to which we, as Christians, have been called.

J1: Meditate on 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Then, answer the following questions in your journal:

- 1. Who gives each of us our gifts?*
- 2. Are the gifts used in the same way? (Support your answer with the verse of Scripture that gives evidence to it.)*
- 3. Who is in charge of the outcome when we use our gifts in various ways?*
- 4. List the different spiritual gifts as recorded in the passage.*
- 5. How is it decided who receives which gifts?*
- 6. For what purpose are the gifts used? (Support your answer with the verse of Scripture that gives evidence to it.)*

Lesson 3, Section 2

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 3, you should be able to:

- A. Evaluate your past experiences in understanding the empowerment of the Spirit in comparison to your present understanding.
- B. Distinguish between the different categories of spiritual gifts.

A big challenge in the area of spiritual gifts is determining what ministry God has prepared us to do. With this in mind, let us spend the remainder of this lesson examining a few categories of spiritual gifts.

One category is what is known as the motivational gifts. We see in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 that God has gifted each of us for ministry, and that these gifts come in many different forms. Romans 12:4-8 further shows us that we each have at least one gift in the motivation category. These gifts include prophecy (meaning rightly speaking the truth of the Word), service, teaching, exhortation, generous giving, leadership, and mercy.

While this passage shows that every believer has at least one gift from this category, many believers fail to exercise these gifts. The reason, unfortunately, is that these are often not seen as the “important” or “impressive” gifts. This is such a tragedy, because our human standards of importance can keep us from attaining the great things that God has in store for us. We will examine this more closely in the next lesson of this course as we study the Spirit’s role in assigning our gifts.

A second category is the collection of gifts that are used for equipping other believers. We see this clearly outlined in Ephesians 4:11-12, as the apostle Paul notes the gifts given for the training of believers and the leadership of the church. These gifts are specifically meant to empower the ministries of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers of the Word.

Q2: True or False? There are at least two different categories of spiritual gifts, one being gifts that motivate us to give, serve, exhort, etc.; and one being gifts that help bring about the ministries of evangelists, pastors, teachers, prophets, and apostles.

There are also many, many other areas of ministry into which God calls His servants. First Corinthians 12:4-6 refers to varieties of gifts, ministries, and effects. The overarching theme, however, is that despite the great number of gifts and ministries, there is only one Holy Spirit who governs the giving and the use of the gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:11)

This means that we are never left to do any act of ministry on our own or under our own power. Rather, the Holy Spirit both empowers us for the job at hand and walks us through the process of ministry. Therefore, every single act of ministry is completely saturated with God’s Holy Spirit.

My friend, do not be fooled into thinking that God has no use for you. Scripture clearly shows that every single one of us who has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord has a specific gift, a specific empowerment, and a

specific ministry. There is no useless member in the body of Christ. As we explore the issue of spiritual gifts, I pray that you begin to seek the heart of God to discover His divine appointment for you.

Prayer

Father God, I confess that I often feel unworthy to do the work You have called me to do. Lord, I often feel that I'm not good enough, not strong enough, not talented enough to be of any use to You. And yet, I have the assurance of Scripture that You have already empowered me to do the work You've called me to do. Help me to submit myself fully to the power of the Holy Spirit, Whom You have sent to live out a Christlike life within me. And, give me Your holy confidence in the spiritual gifts You have so graciously poured upon me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

Galatians 5:22-23

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

J2: Write about an experience when you chose to submit yourself to God and trust Him to work through you and to empower you with His gifting. Then, write about a time when you felt incapable of being used of God and chose not to give Him the opportunity to work through you. Explain why you felt the way you did, and re-evaluate that experience in light of what you just learned in this lesson.s

Life Principles Center

Course: Life in the Spirit

T3_CC_L4: The Holy Spirit: Giver of Gifts Part 2 (MC180)

Introduction: Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson. This lesson is structured with two separate sections to help you maximize your study time.

Lesson 4, Section 1

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 4, you should be able to:

- A. Understand Romans 12:6-8 and this passage's implications on your understanding of spiritual gifts.
- B. Reflect on the revelation of God's character.

Scripture

Read Romans 12:6-8

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Lesson 4

We have already seen that every believer is given a specific spiritual gift at the time of his salvation experience. These gifts are different from our natural talents and abilities, and are to be used for specific ministry purposes. Whether you are a pastor, businessman, lawyer, farmer, housewife, or student, you have a ministry calling on your life. God calls each one of us into service in some particular way, and His Holy Spirit empowers us to succeed in this special calling.

Now, we often get into trouble in this area because we miss a single, crucial point: **we do not get to choose what spiritual gift we receive. That is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit alone.**

We mentioned in the last lesson that some people downplay or outright ignore certain spiritual gifts because they do not seem exciting

or dynamic enough. In our minds, we often order the different gifts in a hierarchy of impressiveness: tongues and healing are the most remarkable, teaching and leadership are somewhere in the middle of our list, and mercy and service are at the bottom. After all, the gift of mercy just does not seem very exciting, does it?

My friend, I hope you are already beginning to see what a tremendous error this way of thinking is. You see, if God had given us the privilege of choosing our own gifts, do you think that many people would choose the gift of mercy, for example? I don't think so. I'm afraid that if left to our own decisions, there would not be many mercies left in the world.

However, some of the most influential, instrumental people in the world are those with this wonderful gift of mercy. On its face, it does not seem very powerful. However, how often have you relied on the mercy and tenderness of a brother or sister in Christ? God has charged these blessed individuals with uplifting His children by bringing them hope and encouragement. How could we ever think this is not a powerful gift?

And yet, because of our misguided mindsets, we usually overlook the power of such gifts in our pursuit of what we see as "higher" gifts. Friend, it is because of our own shortsightedness that God has spared us this error. In His perfect wisdom, He has given the responsibility for choosing our gifts solely to the Holy Spirit.

J1: Meditate on Romans 12:6-8. Compare it to Romans 12:3, and ask God to give you insight into how to apply these to the use of your gifts. In the last lesson of this course, we'll be doing a spiritual inventory of your gifts. But for now, spend some time meditating on these Scriptures and recording what God reveals to you as a journal entry.

Each gift of the Spirit is given intentionally. God does not give us these empowerments haphazardly; rather, He takes into account our talents and interests. That is, knowing what He has called us to do, God considers our abilities, skills, and personalities and augments these things with a specific spiritual gift. Therefore, we can trust that He will certainly prepare and empower us for whatever He calls us to do.

J2: Has God ever called you to a task that you felt ill-equipped to do? After you completed the act of service—whether it meant teaching a small group, calling an old friend to encourage her, or sharing the

Gospel—what was the result? How did God change your perspective of Him?

Lesson 4, Section 2

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 4, you should be able to:

- A. Understand the significance of scriptural context.
- B. Examine your own spiritual gifts.

Let's spend the rest of this lesson examining the error of considering some gifts more valuable or desirable than others. Most often, we see this in relation to the gift of tongues. Throughout the history of the church, this gift was seen as somehow set apart from the others, because it is such a public and dramatic expression of the work and presence of the Holy Spirit.

For these reasons, the early church sometimes fell into error by exalting this gift above the others. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul reminds the Corinthian church that the power or expression of the gift is not what is important, but rather the love that motivates the exercise. When we use our gifts for the sole purpose of bringing attention to ourselves, we are guilty of misusing the wonderful gifts that God has given us. These gifts are not meant to bring us fame, but to build up the members of the Church.

And yet, many churches still fall victim to this tragic mistake. Oftentimes, one specific gift is lifted up and used as a type of litmus test to measure the faith and "spirituality" of a believer. In these situations, we are taking the gift-giving responsibility away from the Holy Spirit and claiming it for ourselves. How can we demand to see evidence of a particular gift in the life of another believer? None of us can choose what gifts we or anyone else receives. Therefore, we have no right to praise some of the gifts over others.

J3: Have you ever been in a situation where you were made to question your own gifts, or to question another's gift and his motivation? Record the memory here.

Also, it is impossible for *every* true believer to have the same gifts. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that a believer will have *all* of the gifts. Rather, in 1 Corinthians 12:29, Paul clearly points out that God's people

will have different gifts, each with a specific purpose. So, when we try to force any spiritual gift on anyone, we are certainly violating God's Word.

Q1: True or False? Referencing 1 Corinthians 12:28-29 apart from its context of verses 27, 30, and 31 could be used as an argument for the elevation of certain gifts over others.

J4: Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-31. How does reading verses 28-29 in context support the truth that spiritual gifts are neither chosen, nor superior to other gifts?

Rather than trying to earn or acquire a gift that we simply were not given, we must instead focus on the spiritual gifts that God has bestowed to us individually. We can be certain that every single believer has been given at least one spiritual gift to be used in ministry. First Corinthians 12:7 declares that "**each one** is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." This is also made clear in 1 Peter 4:10, "As **each one** has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

These passages show that no one has been left out of the distribution of spiritual gifts. If you have received Jesus as Lord and Savior of your life, then you have been specially gifted by the Holy Spirit to do some specific work in the Church.

Do not waste your time wishing for other gifts. Instead, spend your time wisely by asking the Lord, "God, what is my spiritual gift, and what ministry have you called me to do?" Then, we must leave all the responsibility of choosing those gifts to Him, who alone knows what ministry we will have and what gift we will need.

In the next lesson of this course, we will take a good look at the purposes for our spiritual gifts. Remember, we have these gifts for a reason, and the sooner we discover what those purposes are, the sooner we can begin to utilize our God-given gifts in His service.

Prayer

Father God, You alone know what ministry You want me to accomplish in the church. And, You alone have the power and the right to choose the appropriate spiritual gifts to enable me to accomplish that work. Lord, forgive me for any dissatisfaction or ungratefulness I have shown regarding my spiritual gifts, and show me exactly how I can best

serve You. Thank You for giving these wonderful gifts, and help us to use them to the glory of Jesus Christ, in whose name I pray, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

Galatians 5:22-23

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

Spend some extra time in prayer today, asking God to help you identify the gifts He has given you. Think about the types of ministry involvements to which you tend to gravitate, and also consider the specific ways through which you enjoy helping others. Ask God to highlight how He has equipped you specifically, thanking Him for His equipping. Record in your journal what God reveals to you, and measure it next to the spiritual inventory you'll take later in this course.

Transcript of Audio/Video Teaching Clip

Putting God in a Box

In this lesson, we are looking at the dangers of thinking we can choose what spiritual gifts we receive. We have seen over and over again that only the Holy Spirit can choose these gifts for us. And so when we place expectations on ourselves or others to possess a certain gift, we are guilty of trying to take away God's right to choose.

Let me give you an example of what happens when we get out of balance in this way. A friend once told me about an experience he had in a church. He had lived in an area where there were not many churches, so he and his wife attended a particular congregation near their home. After joining the church, they wanted to get involved in the Bible study ministry.

Now, I know this man and I know that he was a gifted teacher of the Word of God. So, when he approached the pastor and said, "We would like to teach Sunday School," the pastor was excited.

However, the pastor then asked, "Have you spoken in tongues?"

My friend replied, "No."

He was shocked when the pastor responded, "Well, then I'm afraid you can't teach Sunday School here. We require all of our teachers to have the gift of tongues."

Now, here's what I want you to see. There is no way to justify that kind of requirement. In First Corinthians chapter 12, verses 29 and 30, Scripture makes it very clear that we all receive different gifts. Each one of us has a specific ministry ordained by almighty God.

I can't require you to show me a gift that God hasn't given you. When we do that, we put God in a little box and say, "Okay God. If you want this person to be a teacher, then you're going to have to give him the gift of tongues. If you don't give him this gift, then I just can't let him teach."

My friend, we cannot dictate what gifts anyone should have. Only God has the right and the responsibility to give the spiritual gifts as He sees fit. Our responsibility, then, is to thank God for what gifts He has given to each of us, and to allow Him to use us in the ministry that He has called us to do.

Life Principles Center

Course: Life in the Spirit

T3_CC_L5: The Holy Spirit: Giver of Gifts Part 3 (MC180)

Introduction: Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson. This lesson is structured with two separate sections to help you maximize your study time.

Lesson 5, Section 1

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 5, you should be able to:

- A. Gain a broader understanding of God's purposes for spiritual gifts.
- B. Understand the "body" language in 1 Corinthians 12:14-20.

Scripture

Read 1 Corinthians 12:14-20

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body.

Lesson 5

Throughout this course, we have taken a close look at the role of the Holy Spirit in our Christian lives, through the development of spiritual fruit and the giving of spiritual gifts. We have seen that only the Holy Spirit can choose what gifts we receive, and we have also examined some general categories of spiritual gifts. As we complete this emphasis, let us now discover the reasons why the Holy Spirit bestows His gifts upon us.

First, the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts for the common good. Too often, we see ourselves either as completely separated from the crowd, or too immersed in the broad church body to

be of any particular good. My friend, both of these ideas are out of balance with what God desires to do in and through you.

When we exercise our spiritual gifts, everyone profits. That means that when you are obediently using your gifts as God leads, you, your church, and everyone around you will reap the rewards of that faithfulness. We may never see everything that God can do through our humble efforts, but we must continue to walk in faithfulness with Him, trusting that He will take our good works and multiply them as He sees fit.

On the other hand, when we fail to use our spiritual gifts for His purposes, then there is always a specific loss. Personally, our relationship with God becomes blocked because we are, in effect, living in rebellion. Corporately, we rob the church of what God wants to accomplish through us. You see, when we refuse to utilize the gifts that God has given us because of fear or feelings of inadequacy, then we are essentially telling God that He is not strong enough to fully empower us. My friend, this is something we must not do. If God has gifted you (and He has), then He has specifically empowered you to do exactly what He wants you to do.

J1: Carefully read 1 Corinthians 12:14-20. With this passage in mind, how has your view of your fears and insecurities expanded? Spend some time in prayer and respond to God as He leads.

Second, the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts so that we may equip one another to fulfill God's purposes. Ephesians 4:11-13 lists some of the spiritual gifts and clearly outlines their purpose. Verse 12 shows that these gifts are given "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." Clearly then, our specific gifts are not mere happenstance. God gives us these gifts for the specific purpose of equipping the men and women of God to live full, successful, dynamic lives.

We often struggle with discovering God's will for our lives; however, this is one area in which I can tell you for certain what God's will is. He certainly desires you to discover your spiritual gifts, to mix those with the natural talents and abilities that He has given you, and to utilize these divine endowments for His glory and purpose. When we engage the Holy Spirit in this way, we will become powerful tools in the kingdom of God.

A danger we must beware of here is the assumption that our spiritual gifts are only useful within the church. My friend, this could not be further from the truth! It is certainly true that we are to use our gifts

within the church to equip and strengthen our brothers and sisters in the Lord, but we must also take our gifts outside the church walls.

When we go about our daily lives under the power of the Holy Spirit, people will notice. Even if they have no idea who God is or how He works, they will notice something different in our lives. You see, you have a ministry that is just as important as mine. God has gifted you just like He has gifted me. Now, we may have different gifts, but you are no less accountable to Him for how you use them than I am. Every single believer in Jesus Christ as Lord can be called a minister, because we all play an important role in the ministry of the church.

Q1: True or False? We should use our spiritual gifts solely in relationship to the church.

Lesson 5, Section 2

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 5, you should be able to:

- A. Understand the danger of making comparisons.
- B. Recognize the purposes for the spiritual gifts God gives us.
- C. Examine Scripture in context and identify its application in your life.

Third, the Holy Spirit gives us gifts so that we can encourage other people. How are we encouraged by the variety of spiritual gifts? By giving different gifts to each person, God has enabled us to see the value and uniqueness of each individual. Because we each have diverse gifts and different mixtures of spiritual gifts, no single Christian can be “replaced” by another. By God’s design, we are each—every single one of us—a vital part of the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:14-21)

J2: Have you ever compared yourself to others, wishing you were gifted in the same way they are? Write about how that thought pattern affected your beliefs and actions. Spend some time in prayer, meditating on 1 Corinthians 12:14-21. How has God changed your belief through this Scripture?

When we talk about spiritual gifts, we cannot ignore our clear responsibility. We must be willing and ready to employ these skills and gifts in the work of ministry. We see this clearly in 1 Peter 4:10, “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good

stewards of the manifold grace of God.” God has surely gifted us, and our responsibility is to wisely use those gifts for His divine purposes.

In the next lesson of this course, we will conclude our examination of spiritual gifts by taking a spiritual gift inventory. This is a simple test that will help you to see the areas in your life in which God has given you special gifts and abilities. Once we actively pursue the use of our God-given spiritual gifts, we will begin to see a dramatic change in our walk with the Lord.

Q2: Which of the following is NOT one of the reasons we are given spiritual gifts from God?

- A. So that we may equip other believers to use their gifts and fulfill God’s purposes.*
- B. So that we each will be encouraged as we see the value of individuals within the church.*
- C. So that we may tell others what gifts they need to gain and how they need to employ them.*
- D. So that we will be fruitful witnesses to unbelievers.*
- E. So that the church as a whole will benefit and prosper.*
- F. None of the above*

Prayer

Father, we love You and praise You for the wonderful privilege You’ve given all of us to have this book in our hand, in our heart, in our life, and upon our lips to share with others. And we ask today, in Jesus’ name, that many who hear will trust the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and begin to live a life that is fruitful and productive.

And then, Father, I pray for those who’ve been sitting, wasting, wandering, floundering, drifting . . . that the Spirit of God has sent such conviction in their hearts [that] they can no longer walk that path but begin to invest their life in that which has eternal, lasting, consequences. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

Galatians 5:22-23

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

Spend some time studying the following Scriptures and considering:

- their relationships to one another
- their relationships to the application of your spiritual gifts
- the historical, contextual background of each passage (What was the author trying to convey to his original audience?)

1 Corinthians 12:1-31

Romans 8:12-17

Romans 12:3-21

Life Principles Center
Course: Life in the Spirit
T3_CC_L6: Discover Your Spiritual Gifts

Introduction: This lesson is divided into two sections to help you complete the entire lesson at your convenience. In order to renew your mind with God's Word and give you an accurate view of Him, it's very important that you take time to complete each assignment before moving on to the next lesson.

Lesson 6, Section 1

Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 6, you should be able to:

- A. Understand the implications of 2 Corinthians 5:10.
- B. Evaluate your own spiritual gifts and how they are or are not currently being employed for God's purposes.

Scripture

Read 2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Lesson 6

So far in this course, we have studied the way in which the Holy Spirit changes, empowers, and directs our lives. Now, as we conclude this course, we are going to see how the influence of the Spirit affects us personally.

The whole discussion of spiritual gifts has little meaning if you do not begin to see exactly what gifts God has given to you specifically. Therefore, in this lesson you will have the opportunity to take a spiritual gift analysis. Now, this is not a "test" in the sense that there are right and wrong answers; rather, this is just a way to help you understand areas of giftedness in your life.

The link below will open up a new window in your web browser and take you to an online gift analysis from the Church Growth Institute. There, you will find a series of 108 questions that will help you identify your strongest ministry gifts. The analysis will take approximately 20-30 minutes, after

which you will be given a summary report and explanation of your most prominent spiritual gifts. When you are finished, be sure to print your personal report for your records, and then return here and click "Next" to conclude our study of our life in the Spirit.

<http://www.churchgrowth.org/cgi-cg/gifts.cgi>

Now that we have taken such a close look at spiritual gifts, I pray that you have begun to discern what gifts the Lord has given you, personally. Simply knowing what your gifts are, however, is not enough for the successful Christian life. We must also use them for God's glory and to strengthen the church.

Second Corinthians 5:10 reminds us that we will have to answer to God for how we use our gifts in this life.

J1: Meditate on 2 Corinthians 5:10. What new insight does God give you about your time here on earth?

Also, 1 Corinthians 3:10-13 demonstrates that our works will be tested "with fire" by the Lord. At that time, all of our works outside of God's plan will be burned up, and only the pure, righteous deeds will remain. We will surely give an account for what we did with what we were given.

My friend, it is horribly shortsighted to forget about the time when the Lord will judge our works. It may not happen today or tomorrow, but Scripture is clear that we will one day be called to account for our ministry. At that time, although you may be eternally secure in your bond with Christ, will any of your works withstand the test of God's holy fire?

When we talk about the fruit of the Spirit and spiritual gifts, we are not talking about eternal security, but rather about our obedience. If I want to walk in the Spirit, then I must be obedient to God. And, that obedience requires that I fulfill His calling on my life.

He has gifted each of us for a specific purpose. If we refuse to strive for that purpose, then we are living in rebellion. The Word leaves no room for doubt: we are to use our gifts to fulfill God's call of ministry upon us all. (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:12)

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, then you are without a doubt eternally secure, as we have studied at length earlier. However, although you may be secure, you are risking your eternal reward if you refuse to

utilize your spiritual gifts for kingdom purposes. If you are unclear about the idea of eternal rewards in heaven, I encourage you to review the complete course on the issue of eternal security.

Let me ask you a simple question. Are you willing to live a life in which you depend only on your natural talents and engage your spiritual gifts only on occasion? Are you willing to stand before the judgment seat of God and explain to Him why you squandered the precious gifts He personally selected for you? My friend, my prayer is that you will never settle for what your natural talents can offer, but instead strive headlong for what God has in store for you. We can only go so far under our own steam; God, however, offers the power to take us successfully into our eternal reward. And that, in the words of the apostle, is better by far. (Philippians 1:23)

Prayer

Father God, we thank You for the enduring, indwelling presence of Your Holy Spirit. Thank You for the Spirit that teaches us, that guides us, and that reveals Your will and Your ways to us. And we thank You especially for the spiritual fruit that the Spirit develops within us, and for the spiritual gifts that You so graciously give to every single one of us who have received Your Son as Lord and Savior.

Help us, Father, and empower us to boldly live the life of ministry that You have called us to live. Reveal to us what You desire to accomplish in and through us, and show us how we may best use our spiritual gifts to bring about Your kingdom purposes. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Homework

Scripture Memory Review

Fill in the blanks to complete this course's memory verse.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is _____, _____, _____,
_____, _____, _____, _____, _____,
_____ - _____; against such things there is no _____.
Galatians ____:22-23*

Assignment

In your journal, record the results of your spiritual inventory. What gifts do you sincerely believe God has given you? Which gifts are you actively using, and which gifts lie dormant? Considering the dormant gifts, what do you think are hindrances to allowing God to use those to bring about His purposes? Is it fear of rejection or isolation from others, lack of opportunity, or ignorance about how that gift is revealed through your life? Respond to these questions in your journal, and ask God to make you aware of the ways He wants to use your gifts on an everyday basis. Record what He reveals.

Conclusion

By now, you've discovered a liberating truth - that you and I cannot be who God has called us to be, without the help of the Holy Spirit.

The closer we grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ, the more we develop His attitudes and actions. In this course, we have seen the beauty of the Spirit-filled life—that we were not just called to be followers of Christ. We were called to reveal His likeness to the world. In John chapter 15 verse 16, Jesus plainly says, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain.”

It is my prayer that your spiritual fruit will continue to grow and develop into a rich crop of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. When this fruit explodes out of the church, you'll be amazed at what God can and will accomplish to bring new life to this dark world.