

Seeking Revival

DAY 4—LIVING A NEW LIFE WITH GOD'S SPIRIT

“You do not have what you want, because you do not ask God. When you do ask for something, you do not receive it. That is because you ask for the wrong reason. You want to spend your money on your sinful pleasures.” JAMES 4:2, 3

Imagine the Possibilities (Hope)

Imagine (Think about if) someone preaches a sermon in your church and asks listeners to accept Jesus and to follow Him. Maybe no one responds (answers). Maybe a few people respond, maybe many do. Because God made humans with free choice, we cannot say we are the reason that other people respond. We should not take God's credit because people respond (answer). However, when many people accept God and follow Him—whether because of public preaching, personal Bible studies, friendship evangelism, or being led by God—then our witness is clearly a success. This success is a gift of the Holy Spirit. We can do nothing, only watch and be amazed as God works miracles.

But too often our Christian lives are not successful. This does not mean our church programs and outreach plans are worthless. The Lord blesses—as much as possible—our honest human work. But how much greater could our witness be if we fully received the Holy Spirit? Only God knows the possibilities! Preacher Henry T. Blackaby writes, “[God] will do more in six months through people who give their lives to Him than we could do in sixty years in our own strength and wisdom” (Blackaby, *Experiencing God*, p. 108, revised edition).

Praying for a new life with God's spirit is important and needed, but we cannot stop there. I invite you to do what you need to do to really experience a new life in Jesus. With God's blessing, your life can become more powerful and full of promise than ever before. Your home and church can also experience new life.

What Is Missing?

First, some questions: What is the reason for all of our problems? Do we have a spiritual problem? Could not having the Holy Spirit be the reason for our weak Christian experience? If the answer is yes, then *why* don't we have more of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

The Bible's answer: “You do not have what you want, because you do not ask God. When you do ask for something, you do not receive it. That is because you ask for the wrong reason. You want to spend your money on your sinful pleasures” (James 4:2, 3). As we learned in the reading for Day 1, God invites us to continue to ask for the Holy Spirit to come into our lives. “Why do we not hunger and thirst for the Holy Spirit, since the Holy Spirit is how we receive power? We should talk about the Holy Spirit, pray for it, preach about it?” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 22).

James also advises that we do not receive what we ask for when we “ask for the wrong reason.” Maybe Paul means that God cannot bless us when our minds are focused (look) away from spiritual things. Paul explains, “The thoughts of a person ruled by sin bring death. But the mind ruled by the Holy Spirit brings life and peace” (Romans 8:5, 6).

What is the mind ruled by sin that Paul writes about? The Bible describes three groups of people and their relationship (ties) to God. In each group are many differences depending on how they were raised (growing up) as a child, inherited character, self-control, age, culture, education, etc. Even with these differences, we find three basic groups: the “natural” or “worldly” person, the “spiritual” or “spirit-filled” person, and the “carnal” (sinful) person or person “of the flesh.”

These three groups are explained in 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 and 3:1-4. The natural person lives in the world and has no relationship (tie) with God yet. Church members belong to the other two groups. Studying the description (explaining) for each group will help us learn where our problem is. The question is, which group do I belong to? A close look at ourselves should help us know what group we are part of—remember that we should look at our own lives, not the lives of other people! What kind of person are you?

Natural: Has no relationship (tie) with God. This person “does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God. These things are foolish (silly) to them” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Spiritual: Has a full, true relationship with God. When we are spiritual (ties with Jesus Christ), “we have the mind [Spirit] of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Carnal: Has a fake or divided relationship with God. “Brothers and sisters, I could not talk with to you as people who live by the Holy Spirit. I had to speak to you as people who were still following the ways of the world. You are not growing (have no ties God) as Christ wants you to. You are still like babies learning” (1 Corinthians 3:1).

Coming up on Day 5: What is the difference between a spiritual and a carnal Christian?

Praying God's Word

The Holy Spirit leads our thoughts.

“People who live under the control of sinful flesh focus on the things of the flesh, but those who live following the Holy Spirit focus on the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8:5).

Father God, we know that we are either under the control of our sinful flesh or the Holy Spirit. Please make us spiritual Christians and help us focus (look at) on the things of the Spirit (things of God).

We are no longer controlled by our sinful desires.

“So I say, live by the Holy Spirit’s power. Then you will not do what your desires (wants) controlled by sin want you to do” (Galatians 5:16).

Dear Lord, thank You that the Holy Spirit frees us from the power of sin in our lives. Please grow the fruit of the Spirit in our hearts. We thank You for this wonderful promise.

The Spirit saves us from God’s judgment (punishment).

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus are no longer under God’s judgment (punishment). Because of what Christ Jesus has done, you are free. You are now controlled by the law of the Holy Spirit who gives you life. The law of the Spirit frees you from the law of sin that brings death” (Romans 8:1, 2).

Dear Father, It is a blessing to know that when we live in the Holy Spirit we are freed from slavery to sin. Thank You that Jesus Himself took our guilt and freed us from sin and death.

More Prayer Suggestions

Thanks and Praise: Give thanks for specific (exact) blessings and praise God for His goodness.

Confession: Take a few minutes for private confession (admit your sins/wrongs) and thank God for His forgiveness.

Guidance: Ask God to give wisdom for current (now) challenges and decisions.

Our Church: Ask God to bless the work of our local, regional, and world church.

Local Requests: Pray for the needs of church members, family, and neighbors.

Listen and Respond (answer): Take time to listen for God's voice and respond in praise or song.

Song Suggestions

SDA Hymnal: Lord, I Want to Be a Christian (#319); Power in the Blood (#294); Showers of Blessing (#195); Leaning on the Everlasting Arms (#469). Other Songs: I Have Decided to Follow Jesus; Shine, Jesus, Shine.