



The Life

The Life

“I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.
Ephesians 4:1”

The Christian life is one of incredible purpose and adventure. However, many Christians find themselves wishing that they were more fulfilled and fruitful. Perhaps you wonder if you're doing enough to please God, or you're struggling to resist persistent temptation. Maybe reading the Bible and praying feel like a chore rather than a pleasure.

Does this ring true for you?

How do you get out of this vicious cycle of failure and frustration?

The Spirit

“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him... But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. **John 14:16-18**”

The night before His death, Jesus spoke to His followers about the Holy Spirit. Jesus called it a 'good' thing that He was no longer going to be physically present among us because it meant that He would send the Holy Spirit – the third person of the Trinity – to live within each of us who put our faith in Jesus. **(John 16:7)**

The incredible reality is that, if we have received Jesus, the Holy Spirit has made His home in us, giving us the means to enter more fully into all that Jesus has already done for us. The Christian life is nothing less than Jesus continuing to live His life in and through us.

But if this is the life we are destined for, why is this not the experience of everyone who puts their faith in Jesus?

The Present Struggle

When we put our faith in Jesus, our struggle with sin does not end. Paul acknowledged that the pull of our own self-indulgent nature (what he describes as our 'flesh') is a threat to our spiritual growth.

In the short term, it may seem more comfortable to choose selfish desires over a Spirit-enabled life of adventure with God, but ultimately we experience frustration and defeat. Our lives often look no different from those of people around us.

That's why Paul had to write to the Christians in Ephesus:

“ So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensibility, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed. That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the

truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. **Ephesians 4:17-24**

Paul was telling them that following Jesus was about much more than simply accepting His forgiveness. It was about a wholesale transformation of character. But, that would only be possible by a rejection of their old ways of living and the adoption of something totally new.

To the Christians in Galatia, Paul said:

“ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For 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. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Galatians 5:16-18

New Life, New Master



When we put our faith in Jesus, we invited Him to take His place on the 'throne' of our lives. We submitted ourselves to His rule and trusted Him to direct and empower us to live for Him and His purposes.

However, when we fail to draw upon the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life, we begin to run our own lives for our own ends. Pulled by our 'fleshly', self-indulgent nature, we end up on the throne of our lives instead of Jesus. As fleshly Christians, whether we're indulging in a worldly way of life, or depending on our own power to be 'good Christians', we will struggle to experience the empowered, fruitful life God intends for us.

Which circle best describes you?
Which circle would you like to describe you?

Led by the Spirit

“You have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

Romans 8:12-14 (NLT)

Romans 6-8 reveals that it is the Holy Spirit who brings about transformation, empowering us to live the life of Jesus. Instead of feeding fleshly desires, we are enabled to invest our lives in God's purposes for the world.

Receiving the Holy Spirit and being led by Him is the only way to live the Christian life. Jesus lives His life in and through us as we:

- Believe by faith that God is already resident in our lives by His Spirit
- Allow Christ to remain on the throne of our lives

- Choose to respond to the prompting, rebuking and urging of His Spirit to live in obedience to Christ
- Believe by faith that when we act in obedience, He will empower us.

All this is made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus! We can join Jesus in dying on the cross and being raised to new life. Our greed, our spite, our selfishness can be put to death in Jesus' crucifixion. But Jesus didn't die just to take away our sin. He conquered death in the resurrection so that our sinful self could be replaced with something better, a new life characterised by the presence of God Himself, by love, humility and forgiveness.

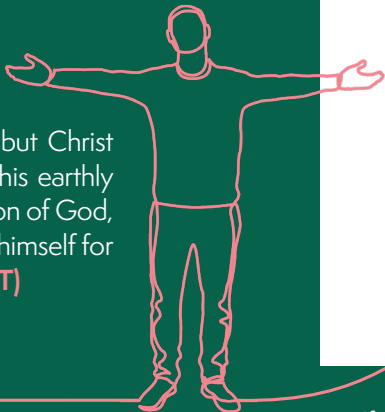
Turning away from sin and seeking the power of the Spirit to become a reflection of the goodness of God is the application of the power of Jesus' death and resurrection in our lives. When we seek the Spirit's help to live in a holy way, to reflect God's goodness, we're experiencing the fruit of salvation: freedom from sin and death.



Surrender

“My old self has been ”

crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. **Galatians 2:20 (NLT)**



- 1 Am I ready to surrender control of my life? (**Romans 12:1-2**)
- 2 Am I ready now to confess and turn away from any known sin? (**1 John 1:9**)
- 3 Do I sincerely desire to be directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit? (**John 7:37-39**)

We received the Holy Spirit by faith alone when we received Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. Through Him, God provides us with the power to live a radically transformed life, like that which Paul talks about in this verse. If this isn't what we're experiencing, we need to ask ourselves some questions:

If you find that you don't have any desire to allow Jesus to direct your life, have no track record of repentance or have consistently chosen to live your own way, then you should stop to consider seriously whether or not you actually are a Christian. This might be the Spirit convicting you of your need to let the old self die and receive the gift of new life that Jesus secured for you.

Breathe the Life

If you answered 'yes' to the three questions on the previous page, then take a moment right now to 'breathe', asking the Holy Spirit to empower you.

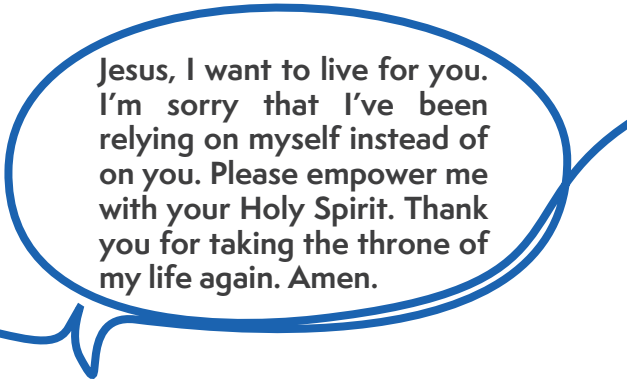
Spiritual breathing is a powerful word picture which can help you experience moment-by-moment dependence upon the Spirit.

EXHALE: Confess and turn away from anything that amounts to trying to live your way rather than God's. Agree with God that you were wrong, and by faith thank Him that He's forgiven all of your sins, past, present and future, because Christ died for you. (**1 John 1:9; Hebrews 10:1-25**)

INHALE: Surrender control of your life to Jesus again, and trust the Holy Spirit to guide and empower you.

Keeping in step with the Spirit is not a one-off action but a lifestyle of repeatedly surrendering ourselves to God and trusting Him to empower us as we obey Jesus as a way of life.

Here's an example of how you could pray:



Jesus, I want to live for you. I'm sorry that I've been relying on myself instead of on you. Please empower me with your Holy Spirit. Thank you for taking the throne of my life again. Amen.

Did you ask the Holy Spirit to empower you?
If not, what's holding you back?



Just because we received the Spirit when we said 'yes' to following Jesus, it doesn't mean that we automatically live a perfect life. But a follower of Jesus turns away from their sin as they become aware of it, allowing God to keep His rightful place in their life.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. **Galatians 5:22-25**”

Have I Received the Spirit?

How do we know if we have received the Holy Spirit?

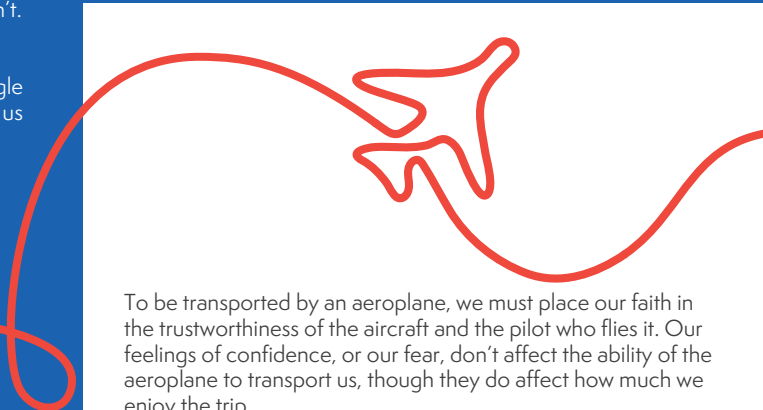
Some of us doubt His presence in our lives when we shouldn't. Maybe we expect some kind of euphoric spiritual high, and when we don't feel one, we wonder where the Holy Spirit is. Maybe we expect that receiving the Spirit will end our struggle with sin forever, and then, when we continue to sin, it makes us doubt if His presence is really with us.

On the other hand, some of us assume He is present in our lives just because we agree with the right doctrines and go to church. But when Paul meets some Christians in Ephesus, he doesn't make assumptions about the presence of the Spirit. He asks, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' (**Acts 19:2**)

As human beings, our emotions are part of who we are and how God made us. Our feelings are important, but they sometimes have a tendency to drive more of our decision-making, attitude and perspective than we realise.

As Christians, it's helpful to remember that our lives are

grounded in the truth of God's promises (**1 John 5:14-15**) not our feelings. The Christian life is lived by faith – trusting God and His Word.



To be transported by an aeroplane, we must place our faith in the trustworthiness of the aircraft and the pilot who flies it. Our feelings of confidence, or our fear, don't affect the ability of the aeroplane to transport us, though they do affect how much we enjoy the trip.

In the same way, as Christians, we don't depend on **feelings** or emotions, but we place our **faith** in the **fact** of God's trustworthiness and the promises of His Word.

There are lots of outward signs that you are being led by the Holy Spirit. As you walk with Him, you will:

- Become a person with a deep, intimate connection with God as your Father (**Romans 8:14-16**)
- Grow in your understanding of God and His Word (**1 Corinthians 2:14-15**)
- Demonstrate a growing power to resist temptation (**1 Corinthians 10:13**)
- See the fruit of the Spirit increasingly evident in your life as you become more like Jesus (**Galatians 5:22-23**)
- Become part of a passionate, worldwide Christian community, characterised by love for one another and for those who don't yet follow Jesus (**1 Peter 2:9; John 15:12-16**)
- Begin to serve God, the church and other people through spiritual gifts (**Romans 12; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11**)
- Increasingly glorify Jesus with your whole life (**John 16:14**)

- Develop a growing desire to please God and fulfil your part in his Great Commission (**Galatians 5:16-23; Luke 10:25-28, Matthew 28:18-20**)
- Experience power and overcome fear as you talk about Jesus with other people (**Acts 1:8**).

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him.
1 John 5:14-15”



Living the Life

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8

The life of the Spirit is not an inward-focussed life; God's purpose for our lives is much greater!

He has left us with a task: to share His rescue plan with the world and provide a foretaste of the kingdom of God. As the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit they were changed from fearful men and women into people who made a bold stand, often at great cost. God used them to change the course of history. This same Holy Spirit is ready to work in us today!

The fear that we feel as Christians may be overcome by the Spirit of boldness that God has given us. Sometimes we may feel like we can't be used by God, because we don't know enough, or we don't know what to say or do. But there will always be questions we can't answer yet and situations where our words or actions seem inadequate.

**Joining in with God
isn't about how much
we know or how
eloquent we can be;
it's about God working
through us.**



We may not *feel* that empowered by God, even after we have prayed and surrendered control. But often when we choose to obey God and act accordingly, rather than give in to temptation, it's only then that we find that it's possible to do what God wants us to do. As we step out in faith, trusting that He will help us, that's when we experience His Spirit enabling us.

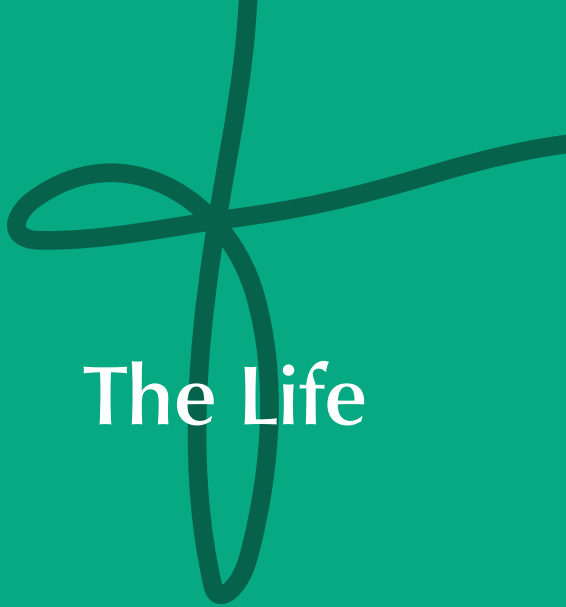
Be careful about expecting instant results, though. We might be excited to go and share but then become discouraged if no-one believes. Maybe we think we're doing something wrong, or the Spirit isn't empowering us, but that's not the case. Peter and Paul both talked with others about the good news of Jesus, in the power of the Spirit: sometimes seeing people believe; other times being beaten or imprisoned.



Success in talking about the good news is like success in delivering a letter. Don't measure success in how people respond but in how faithful you are to Jesus' command to be His witness.

If we live every day of the Christian life in the power of the Spirit, fear can be overcome, love can be demonstrated, and the good news about Jesus' death and resurrection can be shared. With the Holy Spirit's help, we can experience the incredible purpose and adventure of the Christian life!

What is it that you could start doing today to help you to experience more of the purpose and adventure of the Christian life?



The Life

How has learning to be led by the Spirit impacted your life?

When I started following Jesus I saw positive changes in my life, but I also met with failures. I've learned that when I surrender my bad habits to Him – relying on His power – they end up disappearing in a way I don't even understand! This is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in my life.

Biju Georgekutty



Time-and-time again, I find the spiritual breathing exercise helpful in processing my frustrations when I mess up. It helps me to be intentional in taking a pause, refocussing, asking God to forgive me, and then inviting Him to empower me as I strive to grow and not repeat my mistakes.

Sean Wood



I grew up never really hearing much about the Holy Spirit, and when I did, I got the impression that He was more like the 'Holy Sidekick'. Understanding who He really is changed my Christian life from one of striving to one of dependence on Him to make me more like Jesus.

Nicole Lewis



When I learnt about the Holy Spirit, I was relieved I didn't have to live the Christian life in my own strength.

Ruth Brown



Learning about the Holy Spirit and being led by Him has helped me live with more joy and freedom and less fear and worry. I feel less pressure to always make the right choices, because I know the Spirit of Jesus is within me, leading and guiding me.

Sujeeth Mathew



As I began to learn to be led by the Spirit, I discovered that I was actually being satisfied and fulfilled in a way that had never happened before.

Jack Barraclough



Learning to be led by the Spirit has meant that I don't have to do things in my own strength and leads me to deeper intimacy in my relationship with God. Even on the hard days, I can rejoice and know that He is working all things together for my good and His glory!

Lauren Graham



Other Resources

Agapé UK have a number of other resources to help you grow in confidence in your faith as well as share your story and God's story with others.

Knowing God Personally is a short booklet outlining the basic principles of what it means to be a Christian by entering into a personal relationship with God.



The **GodTools** app makes the contents of the *Knowing God Personally* booklet available in 50+ languages via your smart phone. Search for 'GodTools' in your app store.



The **CONNECT** Bible study series is a six-session series for small groups designed to introduce the central themes of the Christian faith by letting the Bible speak for itself.



Living & Telling is a training resource for small and large groups designed to encourage, inspire and equip you to help others discover Jesus and to do that naturally as a way of life. It's a 10-part video-led series which is downloadable for free.



You can find out more about, and purchase, all of these resources and others from our website: **arc.agape.org.uk**.

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