

LIFE CONCEPTS



STEPPING
FROM
BEING

UNPREPARED
TO
EQUIPPED

LEADER'S GUIDE



BIG IDEA

The new believer needs to be prepared for the inner struggles that will occur because of the desires of the sinful nature, or flesh. In order to overcome these desires and begin living out God's desires, the new believer must be equipped to walk in the Spirit. Begin by reviewing what you have covered with your friend up to this point. So far, we have explored the Bible's answer to three common struggles:

- 1) **UNCERTAINTY** - we have considered how God wants to move us from uncertainty in our relationship with Him to confidence.
- 2) **UNWORTHINESS** - we have learned God wants to move us from our feelings of unworthiness resulting from our sin and failure to the experience of His forgiveness.
- 3) **UNABLE** - we then explored how we are unable to live the Christian life in our own strength. But God wants to give us the power to do so through the filling of the Spirit.

Today we want to consider the source and solution to most of our struggles. As we have seen, the Christian life isn't a struggle-free life. Yet, most Christians are unprepared for the inner battles they will face.

STEPPING FROM

BEING UNPREPARED TO EQUIPPED

THE 5 ELEMENTS OF THE TEMPLATE

The goal of your interaction is to effectively and relationally communicate key biblical concepts, and so each interaction contains the following elements: Comparing Our Stories; Considering Our Struggles; Exploring the Solution; Examining the Sketch; and Taking Steps.

COMPARING OUR STORIES

Share your story of the inner struggle you have experienced as a believer – wanting to do what was right but often failing to do so or not wanting to do what is wrong, but doing that very thing. Be open and share an appropriate example. Remember: keep your story to two minutes or less. Allow the new believer to give some feedback to the question about inner struggles. Then read the “Think about it” notepad.

CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

WHY DO YOU THINK MOST BELIEVERS ARE UNPREPARED FOR THESE INNER STRUGGLES? Some people assume that, if Christ has saved them, the Christian life should be easy.

They think everything should just automatically change within them. They don't expect the struggle and, thus, aren't prepared for it. Other people don't realize how susceptible they still are to doing what is wrong. They have developed lifestyles and habits that lead them back into wrong patterns or practices.

HOW DO PEOPLE FEEL WHEN THEY ARE FACED WITH A SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE THEY ARE NOT PREPARED FOR? For example, how would you feel if you were enrolled in an upper level language course for a language in which you had never learned the basics? Scared, intimidated, frustrated, helpless, defeated.

Being unprepared in the face of the struggle is a sure set up for failure. But that is not God's design for the Christian life. This passage will give your friend the skills needed to face this new challenge.

EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

Together read the whole passage aloud.

WHO ARE THE OPPONENTS? The Spirit and the flesh.

Review who the Spirit is using the previous concept.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE DESIRES OF THE SINFUL NATURE GO UNCHECKED? Those who practice (or live continually) these things won't inherit the kingdom of God. They won't experience eternal life. In other words, this is the lifestyle of the natural man or the man without the Spirit (as we talked about last time).

The person who practices the deeds of the flesh as an ongoing lifestyle may likely be a natural man, as identified in 1 Corinthians 2:14. Also in 1 John 3:6, we learn the continued practice of a sinful life may indicate that the person is not a true believer.

WHAT IS PRODUCED WHEN WE WALK BY THE SPIRIT? The fruit of the Spirit.

The Spirit-led individual is doing what is right; that is, he is not breaking any law. But this is not because he is focused on trying to keep the law. Rather, it is because of his relationship with the Spirit. The law is not the issue when you are walking in the Spirit. The issue is the relationship, not rules.

ACCORDING TO VERSE 24, HOW HAS OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE SINFUL NATURE CHANGED?

There is a sense in which we have died to our flesh. In fact, we have put it to death.

All who belong to Christ Jesus (that is, all true believers) have crucified the flesh. The new believer may wonder, "Did I do that?" Paul says, if we belong to Christ, we did. When we turned from our old way of life (life in the flesh with sin as our master) and turned to God (life in the Spirit with Jesus as our Master) we were united with Christ. This union identified us not only with His life, but also with His death (Romans 6:1-14). So, it is actually the work of God's Spirit that unites us with Christ in His death. Since that occurred when we turned to Christ, in principle, it can be said that we crucified the flesh. Paul argues here and elsewhere that since we have crucified the flesh and its desires, don't, don't, don't (repetition reflects his emphasis) return to living by the flesh. (Ephesians 4:22-24 and Colossians 3:5-10)

SINCE WE NOW LIVE BY THE SPIRIT, WHAT SHOULD CHARACTERIZE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SPIRIT?

If we live by the Spirit (and we certainly do), then it only makes sense we should also walk by the Spirit. For example, earlier in this letter, Paul asks, "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3, New American Standard Bible) Of course, the answer that is expected is no.

SUMMARY

WHAT THE BIBLE EXPLAINS, WE SHOULD BELIEVE. WHAT IS TRUE ABOUT YOURSELF?

I have a conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. Both are a source of desires within me. I am not under the Law. I live by the Spirit.

WHAT THE BIBLE COMMANDS, WE SHOULD DO. WHAT ARE YOU COMMANDED TO DO?

Only one thing –walk by the Spirit.

WHAT THE BIBLE PROMISES, WE SHOULD EXPECT. WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT IN MY LIFE? We won't carry out the desires of the flesh and we will produce the fruit of the Spirit.

EXAMINING THE SKETCH

Discuss the sketch and explain the possible scenarios. The two scenarios illustrate two right responses to sin.

THE ISSUE: WHAT DO I DO WHEN I FAIL TO “KEEP IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT “?

Read Scenario One and point to the circle on the sketch labeled with an “A.” As you read the paragraph, it may be helpful to illustrate the point by using a true example from your experience (e.g., becoming aware that you were complaining about a situation).

Read Scenario Two and point to circles B and C on the sketch. Again use a concrete example from your experience (e.g., telling a lie or cheating on an exam). Circle the words “Spiritually Breathe” on the sketch and underline the same phrase in the third paragraph. Ask the person if breathing spiritually makes sense.

Read through the final paragraph on this page and be sure to allow the new believer to respond to the initial question.

AS YOU LOOK AT THIS SKETCH, WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN THIS PROCESS?

The critical issue is whether the person is confident that he is currently trusting Christ to direct and fill his life by the Spirit. If so, he may be unaware of any sin. If he is aware of some sin in his life, encourage him to breathe spiritually and make sure he trusts Christ to fill him with the Spirit.

TAKING STEPS

Read through the four steps and have your friend answer the final two questions.

NEXT CONCEPT

Next time we'll focus on the last of the common struggles in this series. We'll talk through our struggle to continue growing as a believer. Our study will help us learn what it will take to become stronger and experience all God desires for us.