

Look at what Paul told the Philippians.

Philippians 2:12-13 NKJV - 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for [His] good pleasure.

Who is doing the work and obedience in verse 12? Who is doing the work in verse 13?

The will to do what's right and the power to do it are installments of God grace (unearned favor). This is a partnership- God gives us the will and power to do His work, and we must be faithful to execute it. We don't do this to earn God's approval, but to keep in step with the heart of God.

WRAP-UP

It has always been God's plan and desire to be present with His people. Eventually we will see that reality in eternity, but for now, He has given us His Spirit to dwell in us. The Holy Spirit is the spark that empowers us to follow Jesus' teaching. But if we choose to sin, we can become enslaved and separated from that spark. Rather, we can choose to obey God and as we walk in step with Him, God partners with us, giving us both the will and ability to do His good work.

MEMORY VERSE

For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. -2 Corinthians 3:17 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

Challenge- Take some time to reflect on your understanding of God's Holy Spirit. Ask Him to give you a fresh and clear perspective of the Spirit that lives in you.

“Fanning the Flame”

Spark #2

INTRODUCTION

God provides the spark we need through His Holy Spirit, but how do we keep the fire going? How do we fan the flame? Well, for one thing, we need to stay close to the source. When we let ourselves become separated the fire dies down. But how does that happen? And if it happens, what can we do to get back in step with God?

Ice Breaker

About how many days did you spend away from home in the last year?

Key Passage

John 16:7 NLT - 7 But in fact, it is best for you that I [Jesus] go away, because if I don't, the Advocate [Holy Spirit] won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. God wants to be Present

The more you study the bible, the more you will find that God desires to be present with His people. That has always been His plan. In Genesis chapter 3 we see God walking in the garden, calling out to Adam and Eve “Where are you?” After sin entered the picture and separated man from God, He still made a way for us to approach Him in the Tabernacle through priestly representatives. But that was not sufficient. In John 16:7 Jesus explained to His disciples that the Holy Spirit (*paraklētos*) would come to them after He departed. The Greek word *paraklētos* used here can be translated helper, comforter, or advocate.

God's relationship to us is described in many ways: king, lord, priest, deliverer... why do you think the Holy Spirit is specifically identified to the disciples as their (paraklētos) helper, comforter, and advocate?

Can you describe a time when the Holy Spirit gave you help, comfort or support?

So, on Pentecost, in the upper room, God's Holy Spirit arrived and settled like flames of fire on those gathered. We are told that everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit. That spark gave the believers power they had not previously known.

Romans 8:11 NLT - 11 The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

Sometimes we hear people talking about how God "showed up powerfully" at a church service. But that sounds like they were observers and God arrived at church from somewhere else.

According to Romans 8:11, where is it that God lives? And what kind of power is God's Spirit credited with in this verse?

We don't have to go anywhere to see God show up, He is always in us. And He has amazing life-giving power.

2. Closing the Gap

God's Spirit is the spark that can ignite a powerful flame in us. But for a spark to ignite something, it needs to be in close proximity.

Isaiah 59:2 NLT - 2 It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.

Did you know that the current of an electrical circuit can jump a small gap in the wiring and continue to deliver power, but if you widen the gap, eventually the power will be lost? Sometimes we create gaps between us and God's Spirit. According to Isaiah 59:2, our sins separate us from God.

Romans 6:16 NLT - 16 Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.

James 1:14-15 NLT - 14 Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. 15 These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.

Sin does even more than create a gap between us and God's Spirit, it enslaves us. So, although we know we should be doing God's will in our lives, we find ourselves in the "death spiral" of sin.

What is the path of that spiral as explained in James 1:14- 15? And what is the solution found in Romans 6:16?

When we are disconnected from the source, our power to follow God fades. But Romans 6:16 tells us we can choose to obey God. And He is there to help set us free.

Romans 6:17 NIV - 17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.

Is there something you are holding on to, or that's holding onto you from which you need to be free? Anything that separates you from God is sin, and it just isn't worth the cost.

Obedience to God is a decision but also a process. This verse says you "have come to obey". Let's start with a decision and declaration to obey God in those areas that have you enslaved, and begin a journey of obedience to God's instruction, right now.

3. Understanding Our Part

Once we've recognized our problem of our sin, and decided to do something about it, what exactly do we do? Romans 16:17 references a "pattern of teaching" that we obey from the heart. It is important to ask ourselves, what must I do and what will God do as we follow this new pattern of teaching. And it is easy to misunderstand how that works.

What is the problem with each of these approaches -

- *I will do the work in order to earn God's approval*
- *I will sit back and expect that God will do all the work for me*