

## Freedom Journey 2

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by Paul Cook

This is a follow-on study to [Freedom Journey 1](#)

We write this study assuming you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you are having regular [daily devotions](#) with God and you are involved with a [good church](#).

This study is designed to help you walk in continued victory from addiction and become fruitful in your walk with God. It builds on the foundation work that was covered in Freedom Journey (Level I). Some of the areas it addresses include:

- Discover your identity in Christ
- Live as the "new creation" that God has created you to be
- Dismantle lust-related strongholds
- Restore love and healthy sexual desire in your marriage
- Discover your spiritual gifts
- Start working to fulfill God's mission for your life

To maximize the effectiveness of this study, we recommend that you keep a written journal of your progress through each page of the study. Each page contains personal application questions that frequently involve writing out your answers. We also suggest that you keep a Bible handy as you go through the study, especially if you will be disconnected from the internet during your study times.

### Outline:

- [New Self Living](#)
- [Live in Love](#)
- [Love Your Spouse](#)
- [Honor God with Sacrifices](#)
- [Get to know the Holy Spirit](#)
- [Spiritual Gifts](#)
- [Be a Faithful Servant](#)
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## **New Self Living**

One of the most important disciplines in our walk with Jesus is that of casting off our "old self" and putting on the "new self." Paul wrote:

<sup>22</sup>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; <sup>23</sup>to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:22-24 [NIV](#)

The old self must be put off, because it is being corrupted by sinful desires and will otherwise lead us back into sin. Simultaneously, we must put on the new self and be "made new in the attitude" of our minds. Note that our responsibility is to cast off the old and put on the new, while God renews us in the attitude our minds. If we fail to carry out our responsibilities, our old habits can block the renewal process. The result will be that we live as "carnal Christians," divided in heart and backsliding into our old habits.

**How to live in the new self:** Hopefully, none of us will settle for carnal Christianity. The remainder of this study is dedicated to exploring how to live in the new self. There are two steps we can take that will help us be successful:

1. **Ask God for help** to make right choices each day, **and then believe that he will help you.** Matthew 7:7-8 [NIV](#) says: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." Your faith in God's word releases God's power in you to do so. The Bible says, "All things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23 [NKJV](#)).

2. **Offer our bodies as instruments for righteousness and not for evil** (Romans 6:11-14): One of the most powerful abilities God created us with is the power to choose. We have the power to choose who our master will be. Paul explained that we can serve only one of two possible masters:

<sup>16</sup>Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? (Romans 6:16 [NIV](#))

The two masters are:

***Sin***

(Rebels against God and leads to death (the old self))

--OR--

***The Holy Spirit***

(Obeys God and leads to life (the new self))

These two masters are not compatible, as their desires are contrary to one another (Galatians 5:16-18). The problem is that we are all tempted to continue serving sin by living in the old self after we have started following Jesus. The devil tells us we can get away with some sin here and there, but that is a lie. As Jesus said in Matthew 6:24 ([NIV](#)), "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other." If we intend to follow Jesus, the Holy Spirit must be our master.

Our daily choices will reflect who our master is. God has given us eyes, ears, hands, mouths, brains, etc. that can be used for good or evil. Paul likened decision-making to seed planting. He wrote, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:7-9 [NIV](#)). Our daily obedience in putting on the new self will bring a harvest of blessings and eternal life if we do not give up!

**The Holy Spirit as our coach:** God has not left us as orphans to try to figure out how to walk in purity on our own. He has sent the Holy Spirit to live in us and empower us to make right choices. The Holy Spirit is like the perfect tennis coach, who faithfully helps us improve our "serve" every day. He guides us in truth, convicts us of sin and counsels us in wisdom for purity. He literally gives us power and life to live in obedience to God ([Romans 8:11,13](#)). He will continue to help us, provided that we don't start ignoring his voice and launching back into sin. This will quench the Spirit's "fire," and block our ears from hearing his voice.

**Benefits:** It is perhaps human nature to want to know "what's in it for us" when we set out to do something. There are some wonderful spiritual and physical benefits to new self living, which include:

- Improved spiritual vision: we will "see" God in a whole new way (Hebrews 12:14)
- Protection from slavery to sin and its many sorrows ([Proverbs 22:5](#); Romans 6:11-14)
- God manifests himself to us ([John 14:21](#)) and Jesus is formed in us ([Galatians 4:19](#))
- Renewed mind (Ephesians 4:22-24): we receive "newness of life" (Galatians 2 & 3; 5:18) from the Holy Spirit
- We enjoy God's favor, blessing and pleasures (Psalm 119:1-4, Psalm 16:11, Psalm 36:8)
- God fills us with joy and peace as we trust in him ([Romans 15:13](#))
- We abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit ([Romans 15:13](#))
- The Holy Spirit grows "spiritual fruit" in our life (Colossians 1:4-6) which includes love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23)
- We are able to test and prove God's will for our life (Romans 12:2)

This is an amazing list of benefits! When we believe God's word and live in obedience, these will become reality in our lives.

### **Personal Application Questions**

- What are the two key responsibilities we have in the transformation process? What does God do for us in the process?
- What does it mean to live as a "carnal Christian"?
- What is the connection between our free will and slavery to sin?
- Can you think of some examples of how sowing to the sinful nature reaps destruction?
- How does the Holy Spirit help us live for God?

**Passages for further study:** We encourage you to take some time to study the below passages in your quiet times. They will help you better understand what it means to live the new life in Christ and pursue holiness.

- [Ephesians 4:17-32, Ephesians 5](#)
- [Romans 6,7,8](#)
- [Galatians 5:13-26, Galatians 6:1-10](#)
- [1 Peter 1:13-25, 1 Peter 2:9-25, 1 Peter 3-5](#)

The next several pages of this study will address some common areas of difficulty in living the new life in Christ.

## Live in Love

"...I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup>Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." Ephesians 4:1-2 [NIV](#)

Nothing is perhaps as challenging for us as to show God's love to people in our life at all times. Thankfully, God helps us live in love. He gave us the scriptures, which tell us how Jesus lived the model life of love. He gave us the Holy Spirit to tutor us each day on how to love even to the most unlovable people in our life.

**Why is it so important that we live in love?** There are several reasons why living in love is important. Here are a few of them:

- It is God's will: All of the commandments are summed up by love. Jesus explained that the two most important commands are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and love our neighbor as ourselves ([Matthew 22:36-40](#)). God is love, and as sons of God (Galatians 3:26) we are to do our Father's will by living in love. Paul wrote, "Be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us..." (Ephesians 5:1-2 [NKJV](#)).
- Love helps us connect with God: John wrote: "<sup>7</sup>Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup>This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him." (1 John 4:7-9 [NIV](#))
- Love is critical to our role in the body of Christ: Love builds up the body of Christ so that it functions properly in harmony and effectiveness. The body of Christ "grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:16 [NIV](#)).

**How well do we understand what true love is?** Paul wrote a practical description of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 [NKJV](#):

"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away."


From this passage, we can see that love is:

- Patient,
- Kind and tenderhearted (Ephesians 4:32).
- Forgiving (Matthew 6:15; 18:34; Mark 11:25-26)
- Rejoicing with the truth
- Always protecting, trusting, hoping and persevering
- Faithful

We also see that love is not:

- Envious
- Boastful or proud (see Philippians 2:3-4 & our page on [pride](#))
- Delighting in evil
- Rude
- Self-seeking
- Easily angered

**Practical Exercise:** Here is an exercise to apply the above points on love to the relationships we have.

- Use our [PDF formatted document](#) , or take a sheet of 8" X 11" paper
- Holding the paper sideways (landscape), make a table with 13 columns and 13 rows
- Label the far left column "role and/or relationship" and then label each of the columns from left to write as follows: patient, kind, forgiving, rejoicing in truth, always protecting/trusting/hoping/persevering, faithful, envious, boastful/proud, delighting in evil, rude, self-seeking and easily angered.
- Write in your roles and/or relationships on each row in the far left hand column. Examples could include: spouse, parent, daughter/son, sibling, co-worker, boss, church, neighbor, and stranger (in public).
- For each relationship, evaluate your love in each category in the columns. For any areas that you **need to work** on, simply write "NW" and then annotate a brief phrase identifying the work needed. For example, if I were prone to be rude to other drivers when out in public, I would put "NW" and "driver courtesy" in the block pertaining to strangers.
- Take this table into prayer before the Lord. For each item, confess your shortcomings / sins involved in each relationship. Ask for the Lord's forgiveness. Finally, ask the Lord to help you show his love in that

relationship. A sample prayer for this could be: "Heavenly Father, I confess that I have not shown love to \_\_\_\_\_(name) in the following ways: \_\_\_\_\_(list). Please forgive me for these sins. Father, I want to show your love to this person. Please fill me with your love and guide me in loving them as you do. Thank you, Father! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."

Keep this table in your journal and review it periodically to check your progress. It will take time to tackle the issues you have identified. Be patient with yourself and continue to ask God to help you. If there are any forgiveness issues from past wounds, be sure to ask God to help you [forgive](#).

### **Obstacle to living in love: Lust**

As you went through your relationships in the above exercise, you probably noticed how your love had been tainted by sin in your life. In my recovery from sex addiction, I discovered that one of the major corrupters of love was [lust](#). Lust is basically a combination of delighting in evil and self-seeking. In fact, lust and love are complete opposites (see [lust vs. love](#)). Where love is giving and selfless, lust is consuming and selfish.

Pornography uses pictures to convey powerfully false messages that try to persuade us that lust is love. The more we look at the porn, the more we lose the ability to discern the difference between lust and love.

**Removing the lust obstacle:** We CAN deprogram our minds from lust and relearn love. This may seem impossible, but with God's help it is possible! Here are two basic steps we can take:

1. Connect with God and ask for healing: When we connect with the source of true love, we'll receive power to bring our thoughts under control and restore a healthy perception of love. The most basic way to connect with God is to have a daily [quiet time](#) with him and remain in touch with him via [prayer](#) throughout the day (Ephesians 6:18). We certainly should ask God for help in purifying our mind of all the evil things we've filled it with. A simple prayer for this is:

"Heavenly Father, Please help me get control of my thoughts and bring them into obedience to you. Please wash my mind with the blood of Jesus and purify my conscience of all my past sins. Father, please restore a healthy understanding of love in me. Please teach me how to give and receive love in a Godly way. Thank you, Father! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."

If you pray that prayer (or one like it), you can take confidence that God will answer your prayer and help you through the Holy Spirit. Be patient, though, as the mind purification process usually takes time and persistence in staying tapped into God. The Holy Spirit will give you the power to change (Romans 8:11,13; 1 Corinthians 6:14).

2. Load our minds with God's word and obey his commands: Loading our minds with the Bible is vital to our forward progress in cleaning up our thoughts. The Bible gives us definitions of love and many practical applications to help us in recovery. Daily Bible study in our quiet time is good place to start. The Holy Spirit will guide us in re-learning love and uprooting the lust-based thinking by reminding us of the word. We must respond by obeying the Holy Spirit's promptings. Jesus said, "**If you love Me, keep My commandments**" (John 14:15 [NKJV](#)).

An analogy I like for this is the Kool-Aid analogy: If you were to take a pitcher of Kool-Aid and place it under the kitchen faucet, it takes time to dilute the Kool-Aid with the water. As you continue to add pure water, the Kool-Aid continues to dilute. Eventually the water in the pitcher is pure and all the Kool-Aid has been removed. This is how our minds are purified with the word of God. The word is like the pure water added to the pitcher. The Kool-Aid is like the residue of sin in our minds - the evil thoughts and memories of sin that stain our minds. As we continue to add God's word to our minds daily, the residue of sin is washed away. Our minds are restored to purity.

3. Stop responding to lust-based impulses: This step could be the most difficult of the three, however if we have been faithful in doing the first two, it should not be that difficult. The problem with lust is that it usually finds a home in our heart because of the pleasure it has brought us in the past. We hold on to it like a pet. We protect it, we feed it and we allow it to live in our hearts. The Bible tells us that the lust must go. Paul wrote, "**But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts**" (Romans 13:14 [NKJV](#)).

Don't feed your "lust pet"! Lust must be starved to death. If you feed it, it will grow stronger; if you don't feed it, it will die. We can ask God to show us just how ugly our pet sin is - as he sees it. With that revelation, we'll likely have no qualms about putting it to death!



### **Practical Exercise:**

- Take a moment in prayer to ask God to reveal the lusts that you are sheltering in your life.
- List the relationships in your life and ask yourself, "Am I harboring lust in this relationship?" and "Am I making provision to feed my lust in this relationship?"
- Circle any of the relationships that you answered "yes" to the above questions
- Next, write down your daily activities, habits and hobbies. For each item, ask yourself "Is this activity feeding lust or making provision for lust in any way?" Circle any that your answer was "yes" for.
- Take your circled items to prayer before the Lord. Confess your sin and ask forgiveness for it. Ask the Lord to empower you and guide you in evicting the lust from every area. A suggested pray for this is: "Heavenly Father, I confess that I have harbored lust in my life in the following relationships: \_\_\_\_\_(list), and in the following activities \_\_\_\_\_ (list). Please forgiven me for these sins. Lord, please help me to detest lust as you detest it. Please empower me and guide me in evicting lust from each of these areas of my life. Thank you, Father! In Jesus' name, Amen."

There may be other areas where lust is hiding in your life that you have not yet discovered. Thankfully, the Holy Spirit is gentle and patient with us. He will bring things to light in our life as we are able to deal with them.

### **Personal Application Questions**

- What are the two commands that sum up all of God's commands to us? (Matt. 22:36-40)
- Who is our role model for "imitating God?" (Ephesians 5:1-2)
- How does a lack of love affect the spiritual health of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:16)
- What are some of the ways lust has infiltrated your life and affected the relationships you have with people?
- What are three steps we can take to remove lust from our lives?

## Love Your Spouse

Whether you are currently married or hope to be someday, this page could be helpful for you in restoring a healthy understanding of marital love. This type of love is a special kind of love that has its own set of challenges. It can take time and work to master, but the results will be worth the effort. Healthy love will bring blessings to every area of your marriage, including sex.

As we noted on the [Live in Love](#) page, there is a difference between love and lust. This difference is magnified in marriage and especially in sex. People involved in sex addiction are often blinded to the difference between healthy sexual desire and lustful sexual desire. In the table below, I've given some examples that highlight the difference between lust-based sexual desire and love-based sexual desire.

<b>Lust-based sexual desire</b>	<b>Love-based sexual desire</b>
"I want my spouse to act out the fantasies I've looked at in porn"	"I want to express my affection for my spouse in a way that he or she will enjoy it most"
"I want my spouse to be willing to try more erotic things during sex...I'm bored with "normal" sex"	"I want my spouse to feel comfortable when we engage in sex....i.e., not pressured into doing something he or she feels is wrong and/or does not enjoy"
"Porn helps me get more excited about sex with my spouse"	"I recognize that porn would weaken my love for my spouse by encouraging me to fantasize about other people. Porn also would make me less satisfied with my spouse"
"I need my spouse to perform a specific sexual act in order for me to feel satisfied during sex"	"The simple joy of being together in sexual intimacy is more important to me than a specific act."
"It's my spouse's duty to provide sex for me, even when he or she doesn't want to do it"	"Though I want sex right now, I'm willing to sacrifice the desire temporarily in favor of waiting for a time when my spouse and I are both interested in having sex."
"I find myself wanting my spouse to exert all the effort during sex"	"I cherish my spouse and want to bless her or him with affection."
"What can I get from sex?"	"What can I give during sex?"
"I'm not sure I'll find my spouse attractive when he or she gets older"	"I recognize that there is so much more to sex than bodily appearance. My love for my spouse goes way beyond his or her looks."

(for more info, see our page [love vs. lust](#))

God wants us to have love-based sexual affection in our marriage. If we tolerate lust in our marriage sex life, even a little, it will weaken our intimacy and sexual satisfaction with each other. Sexual dissatisfaction in the marriage can increase our vulnerability to sexual temptations.

After God delivered me from porn addiction, he gradually convicted me of the lust-based sexual desire I was sheltering in my marriage sex life. I was hanging on to some of the memories of porn I had viewed and allowing them to influence our sexual activity. God brought me to a place where I was willing to surrender my lustful desires and ask Jesus to restore healthy sexual desire in me. I asked him to teach me how to love my wife sexually without lust. God has been answering those prayers faithfully to this day.

A great help to "re-programming" our minds from lust-based thinking is God's word. The Bible has much to say about marital love. As we study God's original plan, we'll be able to better recognize the devil's counterfeits.

Before discussing specifics for husbands and wives, I would like to point out that often the roots of many relational problems in marriage go back to the curses caused by Adam and Eve's sin. God said that Eve would have "desire for" Adam, meaning that she would want to control him and possibly undermine his leadership in the home. Adam in turn would tend to rule harshly over Eve ([Genesis 3:16](#)), causing a truly miserable relationship. The effects of these curses can still be seen working in unhappy marriages today. Often they show up as subtle tendencies that pry spouses apart.

We don't have to live with such curses. Jesus broke the power of the curse by dying on the cross ([Galatians 3:13-14](#)). In Jesus' name, you have the authority to break such curses and invite God to heal you and your spouse from any destructive tendencies at work in your marriage. The prayers at the end of each section below will address roots related to the Eden curses.

**For Husbands:** Jesus modeled the husband's love in how he loved the church. Ephesians 5:25-27 [NKJV](#) says:

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."

This passage underscores the noble call that husbands have. Jesus surrendered himself for the church, in order that we might be sanctified, cleansed and presented as holy to God. The husband is to follow this example of sacrificial love by placing his wife's interests ahead of his own. Paul further explained sacrificial love in Philippians 2:3-4 ([NIV](#)):

"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others"

Showing this type of love doesn't mean that husbands have to abandon their interests, but it does mean they must give their wives' interests priority at least on par with their own. With that in mind, let's examine some further points about a husband's love:

**Love your wife as your own body:** God instructs the husband to nourish and cherish his wife as a member of his own flesh ([Ephesians 5:30-33](#)). Porn can cause a husband to value his wife primarily on the basis of her sexual appearance and/or performance. Her body is not intended as a replacement for pornography, but rather, she is a God-given, lifelong companion.

God wants us to delight in our wives in a much deeper way than just sexually. [Proverbs 5:15-20](#) instructs the husband to rejoice in his wife, to be satisfied with her body and to be captivated by her love. Note that these are decisions the husband must *choose* to make. Here are some practical examples of loving your wife as your own body include:

- Pray for and care for her when she is sick
- Help her out around the home
- Protect her reputation in public and support her in family relationships
- Pleasure her during sex
- Remind yourself of her good qualities and thank God for them
- Don't let your eyes & mind fantasize about other women
- Don't ask her to do sexual acts against her will

**Love your wife with understanding:** Your wife is a delicate vessel and a co-heir in Christ. If you don't treat her gently and reverently, God will not hear your prayers ([1 Peter 3:7](#))! Your wife is not a sex object created to satisfy your lust. She is a person, a wonderful creation made in God's image. God has given her to you as a gift, and he expects you to treat her with respect, gentleness, dignity and consideration ([Romans 12:10](#)). Practical examples of applying this include:

- Seek first to understand where she is coming from in the situation
- Communicate your feelings to her without trying to manipulate her
- Speak to her with kind words (not harsh words)
- Pay attention to her when she talks to you
- Respect her opinion, especially when it differs from yours
- Praise her for her good qualities and affirm her in the good things she does
- Don't ask for sex when she is not in the mood
- Ask for forgiveness whenever you fail to love her as God wants you to

**Show your wife her due affection - don't neglect her: [1 Corinthians 7:4-6](#)**

describes the mutual authority of the husband and wife over each other's bodies. This is not a mandate for the wife to give sex whenever the husband wants it. Rather, it is a reminder to the husband and wife to be sensitive to each other's sexual desires so that neither becomes vulnerable to temptation. Sensitivity is fostered through loving communication, affection, affirmation and tenderness. When these are in place, the marriage sex life is virtually guaranteed to be wonderful. Practical applications of this include:

- Make the effort to show affection for your wife during sex in the way she wants it (if you don't know what that is, ask her!)
- Express non-sexual affection to her regularly: Men sometimes fail to realize how important it is for a woman to know that her husband loves her as a person, not as a sex object. Non-sexual affection sends the message of "I love you" in a special way that she will appreciate deeply. Caution: Don't show non-sexual affection with the underlying motive of wanting to get sex. That will nullify any message of "I love you" you're trying to send!
- Take time during lovemaking with your wife and don't try to rush things; spend time relaxing together during the "afterglow." Men too often forget that the afterglow time is a great opportunity for re-securing the bond of intimacy together.

Indeed, showing this type of love is something that husbands will need the Holy Spirit's help in doing. It IS POSSIBLE and God will help you to live it daily! If that is the desire of your heart for your marriage, please pray this suggested prayer:

"Heavenly Father, Thank you for giving me a model through Jesus of the love I am to show for my wife. I confess that I have not loved my wife as you have instructed me to. Please forgive me specifically for not \_\_\_\_\_(list

shortcomings). In the name of Jesus Christ, I claim the finished work of the cross and break any curses operating over my wife, myself and our marriage. Lord, I commit today to pursue Godly love for my wife by loving her as Christ loved the church, loving her as my own body, loving her with understanding and showing her due affection. Father please strengthen me by the Holy Spirit to love her in these ways. Please ignite the fires of passion between us and restore in us healthy sexual desire for one another. I ask that you will help my wife be the woman that you want her to be. Please bless her and work in her life. Thank you, Father! In Jesus' name, Amen."

**For Wives:** Ephesians 5:22-24 [NIV](#) is one key passage that explains the type of love a wife is to have for her husband:

"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup>For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup>Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything."

The idea of submission does not mean wives are to be doormats for their husbands, but it does mean they are to respect their husbands in their applicable roles (husband, father, provider, etc.) just as they respect the Lord. Granted, the husband's attitude will greatly help or hinder the wife from putting this to practice. If he is not fulfilling his role in loving his wife as Christ loves the church, it will be difficult for the wife to submit to him as the church submits to Christ.

As mentioned above, women often have a tendency to want to control their husbands. A controlling attitude conflicts with the idea of submission. A wife can easily frustrate her husband with a controlling or argumentative spirit, derogatory words, or excessive criticism. Solomon reflected on how this can affect the husband in Proverbs 21:19 [NIV](#): "Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife." The challenge for such a woman will be to use her words to instead edify her husband, and surrender her desire to control him to God. Practical examples of submission can include:

- Praise your husband's good qualities in public and private
- Avoid excessive criticism
- Don't crush or belittle his dreams
- Don't manipulate him
- Don't purposely do things to frustrate, mock, annoy or anger him
- Entrust your husband and his negative qualities to the Lord's care (Philippians 4:6-7) and don't try to change him. [Intercessory prayer](#) for

your husband can work wonders behind the scenes, because it releases the Holy Spirit to convict him of sin, righteousness and judgment.

Other key points for wives include:

**Adorn your heart with a gentle and quiet spirit:** Peter wrote: "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight" (1 Peter 3:3-4 [NIV](#)). These qualities of your inner self will flow directly from your relationship with God. They are closely related to the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), which grow in you as walk with the Lord faithfully. The world values everything contrary to this, so you'll need to be relying on God for strength to live as a "counter culture" woman.

**Show your husband due affection:** [1 Corinthians 7:4-6](#) describes the mutual authority of the husband and wife over each other's bodies. This is not a mandate for you to give sex whenever your husband wants it, but it is a reminder to be sensitive to his sexual desires. This also does not mean that you should submit to sexual acts that you feel are wrong. Your availability and willingness to participate in "normal" sexual relations will help your husband be less vulnerable to external sexual temptations he faces. If your husband is doing things that are causing your sexual desire to dry up, seek the Lord's direction in how to best communicate your feelings with your husband.

**Seek wisdom from Godly women:** Since there are no perfect marriages, putting the scriptural model for marriage into practice will present some challenges. A valuable source of wisdom and insight on these challenges can be other Godly women. Paul wrote to Titus about how the older women in the church were to train the younger women in the various aspects of love: "Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God" (Titus 2:4-5 [NIV](#)). You may have to look hard to find a Godly older woman who will help you and perhaps mentor you. This underscores the need for you to be plugged into a church where people are living for God. If you are unable to find a woman to help you, at the very least you can use [1 Corinthians 13:4-8](#) as the pattern for loving your husband.

With God's help, you can love your husband in the above ways, no matter what his disposition. If that is the desire of your heart for your marriage, please pray this suggested prayer:

"Father in Heaven, I desire to show pure love for my husband (and family). I confess that I have failed to love him in the following ways: \_\_\_\_\_(list). Please forgive me for those failures. In the name of Jesus Christ, I break any curses that have been affecting my husband, myself and my marriage. I surrender any desire in me to control my husband to you, Father. Please work in his life as you see fit. I trust him in your hands. Please help me resist the desire to control or fix his life. Please grow in me all the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and especially that I will have a gentle and quiet spirit. Please help me be sensitive to his needs and faithful in speaking edifying words to him. Lord, please lead me to a woman (or women) in my church that I can learn from. Finally, Father, please ignite the fires of passion between my husband and I, and teach us healthy sexual desire for one another. Thank you, Father! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."

**Repairing the sex life:** The sexual relationship in marriage often reflects the emotional condition of the relationship. The above points perhaps have surfaced some attitudes that you've needed to deal with. The below additional steps will help you reconcile with your spouse and move forward in repairing your sexual relationship.

- **Confession and Forgiveness:** This may be a very difficult step for some people. It can seem humiliating, but if you humble yourself and make things right with your spouse, God will honor you accordingly. First, confess to your spouse any unloving attitudes you have harbored toward them and ask for their forgiveness. Next, in prayer, forgive your spouse for anything you have not forgiven them for. Finally, ask for God's forgiveness for holding on to the above attitudes and ask for his help in exhibiting Godly love for your spouse.
- **Pray for sexual healing:** This is not a complicated prayer, and basically we are asking God to help us sexually reconnect with our spouse in a healthy way. Specifically, we're asking God to help us re-channel our sexual energy into loving expression for our spouse, teach us how to romance our spouse again, restore our physical attraction for our spouse and cleanse our minds of any contaminants that are pointing us toward unhealthy sex (porn, masturbation, memories, etc.). Here is a suggested daily prayer to address those issues:

"Heavenly Father, thank you for my spouse and the gift of sex. I lift up our sexual relationship to you. I pray that we will enjoy sex to its fullest extent as you have designed it to be in marriage. Father, please help me re-channel my "sexual energy" into pure and loving expressions of affection for my spouse (and not into porn, masturbation, etc.). I surrender any selfishness that I have



harbored in my heart as it relates to sex. Please teach me how to romance my spouse and delight in him or her again. Please restore our physical attraction for each other. Help me to see my spouse's positive qualities and encourage him or her in them. Finally, Lord, please cleanse my mind of the pollutants I have allowed to corrupt our sexual relationship: \_\_\_\_\_(list as applicable). I apply the blood of Jesus to every thought and every memory associated with those things. By faith, they are washed clean by the blood of Jesus. Thank you, Father! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."

It make take some time for the answers to the above prayer to manifest. I encourage you to be persistent in your prayer and obedient to the Holy Spirit as he surfaces new areas for you to work on. If you do this, God will answer your prayers and your sex life will improve! I experienced this "sexual healing" firsthand in my marriage after God freed me from porn addiction.

### **Personal Application Questions:**

- Are you tolerating lustful attitudes toward your spouse? If so, what are the roots of those lustful attitudes? Take a moment to pray and ask God to cleanse your conscience of those roots with the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 9:14).
- In what ways have you been resisting the biblical type of love for your spouse?
- What actions do you plan to take to change?
- Who has God sent to you to help you love your spouse? (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

## Honoring God with Sacrifices

Honoring God with our resources is a form of "spiritual sacrifice." A spiritual sacrifice is something that we do to worship God and affirm his Lordship over us. Peter explained, "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5 [NASB](#)). Peter went on to explain why we should offer spiritual sacrifices:

<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup>Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10 [NIV](#)

God called us out of darkness into the light so that we would bring glory to him through worship. In view of the incredible price that he paid for our redemption, we owe it to him to offer our bodies, finances, talents, time and other resources as sacrifices to honor him.

### Examples of spiritual sacrifices

**Your body:** Our bodies are very important to God. In fact, Paul wrote that the body is meant for the Lord and the Lord for the body (1 Corinthians 6:13). This means that God wants to use our bodies to bring his light and truth to the people in our lives. We bear his image and are ambassadors of his love. If we use our bodies for evil, we contribute to hindering God's work on earth and may even become instruments of the devil. Conversely, if we use our bodies for good, we further God's work. Paul wrote, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1 [NKJV](#)). Here are some examples of how we can honor God with our bodies (Romans 6:13):

- Rejoice in our spouse and abstain from sexual immorality ([1 Corinthians 6:13-20](#))
- Eat right; abstain from gluttony; abstain from drunkenness (Romans 13:13, 1 Corinthians 5:11)
- Do good works ([Hebrews 13:16](#), [Romans 12:10-13](#), [Romans 6:11-14](#))
- Take your thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ; cast down any imaginations raised up against the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:5) (see [Control Thoughts](#))
- Control your eyes: don't use them to fill your mind with evil thoughts (see [Eyes](#)); abstain from lust (1 Peter 2:11-12)

- Lift your hands to the Lord in worship and don't use them to masturbate (!)
- Dress your body modestly so that you don't cause others to stumble through lust
- Commit our body, soul and spirit to the Lord's service each day: I say a simple prayer like this during my quiet time: "Father God, I yield my body, soul and spirit to you today to do your work. I offer my members as instruments for righteousness and not for sin." This type of prayer helps to reassert my allegiance to the Lord for that day.

**Your money:** Many people are caught up in the pursuit of riches, impairing their relationship with God. Paul wrote, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10 [NKJV](#)). The way to recover from a such a condition or to prevent it from happening starts with being generous with the money God has given us. Here are few scriptures that confirm this:

"I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.<sup>26</sup> They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed." Psalm 37:25-26 [NIV](#)

"A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed" Proverbs 11:25 [NIV](#)

"A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor." Proverbs 22:9 [NIV](#)

Being generous is a separate issue from giving a tithe of your earnings to the Lord (typically 10%). Generous giving is over and above what we are tithing to our church or ministry. It truly reflects our heart condition and who is Lord over our finances. Practical ways to make this sacrifice include:

- Give to the poor (Proverbs 22:9)
- Lend to the person who wants to borrow from you (Matthew 5:42)
- Give charitable gifts secretly (Matthew 6:1,3-4)
- Give to people and ministries serving the Lord ([2 Corinthians 8:1-7, 2 Corinthians 9:10-15](#))
- Give cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)
- See [2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15](#), [Philippians 4:18](#), [2 Corinthians 9:5-7](#) for further study
- For additional verses, see [Verses on Giving](#)

**Your spirit and heart:** Though this sacrifice may seem less tangible, it is extremely important for us to practice. This sacrifice is made by laying down our pride and putting on humility. [Pride](#) sets God against us (Leviticus 26:19, Proverbs 15:25) and makes us vulnerable to the devil. Humility invites God to work through and in us (James 4:6-8).

The desire to control our lives is a common symptom of pride. The question we can ask ourselves is, "Who really is Lord of my life?" Have we truly made Jesus Lord over our decisions, or have we simply given him lip service and kept ourselves on the "throne" of our life? Too many people declare allegiance to Jesus, and then continue to live as lord of their life never submitting to Jesus. If we think we can do a better job in running our life than God, or are constantly trying to wrestle control back from him, we're suffering from pride!

David wrote, "[The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart--These, O God, You will not despise](#)" (Psalm 51:17 [NKJV](#)). A broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart create a picture of true humility. It is up to us to "put on" humility. Peter described putting on humility like putting on a garment in [1 Peter 5:5-6](#). Practical ways to do this include:

- Consult the Lord on the decisions of life (Philippians 4:6-7): This is a form of submitting our will to God's will (Luke 22:42, James 4:7). The first test will be if we're willing to wait on the Lord for the guidance we've requested before we decide what to do. The final test is if we will follow the guidance the Lord gives us regardless of our personal benefit.
- Consider others better than ourselves ([Philippians 2:2-4](#)): listening to others' points of view; not dominating conversations; being quick to listen and slow to speak ([James 1:9](#), [Proverbs 15:2](#); [Ecclesiastes 10:14](#))
- Attend to the needs and interests of others in addition to our own ([Philippians 2:2-4](#)): This helps break down any self-centeredness we may be harboring. Having a giving heart helps us experience the joy of helping others.
- Humble ourselves before God by offering spiritual sacrifices: Spiritual sacrifices are vehicles for us to assert God's Lordship in our lives and our allegiance to him. For example, [fasting](#) is a powerful way to humble ourselves before God. In doing so, we temporarily set aside our fleshly need and desire for sustenance in order to seek God. This forcible submission of the flesh to the spirit intensifies our submission and devotion to God. It invites God to work in us and minister to us in the area we are seeking him about to a greater degree.

**Your words:** The highest purpose for our speech is to praise God. God has given us tongues and lips to declare the wonders of his glory and salvation to all creation. Hebrews 13:15 [NIV](#) says, "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name." Too often we use our speech for everything but praising God. Our tongue is a tool with which we can sow good or evil. God calls us to honor him by how we speak and to not speak evil ([James 4:11-12](#)).

James characterized speaking evil as mixing bitter water with fresh water. As a result, the bitter water corrupted the fresh water (James 3:11-12). Likewise our evil words will corrupt us and we will be judged by those words ([Matthew 12:36-37](#)). The Bible gives us clear instruction about what to avoid verbally. Examples of things to avoid include:

- Foolish and ignorant disputes (2 Timothy 2:23)
- Gossip; speaking evil about people (whether true or not)
- All "empty (vain, useless, idle) talk, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness." (2 Timothy 2:16 AMP)
- Foolish talking, complaining (Philippians 2:14)
- Coarse jesting, sexual humor, sarcastic humor (Ephesians 5:3-4)
- Voicing evil speculations or imaginations (2 Corinthians 10:5); saying or assuming the worst will happen; speaking in reaction to fear instead of faith

On the other hand, our positive words can refresh and restore us and others just as fresh water refreshes and restores our bodies. Examples of speaking good words include

- Praising God (Psalm 145:2,6,12,21)
- Thanking God (Ephesians 5:3-4; Hebrews 13:15)
- Encouraging people in their faith and hope (Ephesians 4:29; Hebrews 10:24-25)
- Praising people for their good qualities (Proverbs 25:11; Hebrews 10:24-25)
- Prayer (Ephesians 6:18; James 5:15-16)
- Declaring God's works to others; witnessing; sharing the Gospel (1 Peter 3:15; Ephesians 6:19-20), etc.
- Reciting scripture; speaking God's word over a situation (Ephesians 6:17)

### **Personal Application Questions**

- What is the purpose of spiritual sacrifices?
- Who benefits more from spiritual sacrifices - you or God?

- Why is your body so important to God?
- How did God model generosity for us?
- Why is humility important to the health of our relationship with God? (James 4:6-8)
- What do our words indicate about our heart? (Luke 6:45)
- Jesus told the rich man in [Matthew 19:16-26](#) that the only thing he lacked was that he needed to sell his possessions and give to the poor. The man refused and went away sad. What things in your life are you having difficulty yielding to God?
- Please take a moment to confess your reluctance to surrender those things to God. Then ask him to build your trust in him and desire to surrender all to him.
- As you read through the example sacrifices, what areas did the Lord prompt you to make changes in?
- What actions will you take to make those changes happen?

## Getting to know the Holy Spirit

It is vital that we stay connected with the Holy Spirit if we plan to live for God. The Holy Spirit is a "person" (yet fully God) who desires to have a relationship with us. Too often people miss out on this wonderful relationship because of fear. The result is that they feel distant and disconnected with God.

**The Holy Spirit's personality:** Knowing and understanding the Holy Spirit's personality will help us recognize the devil's lies that keep us from embracing the Spirit. A common fear is that the Holy Spirit will deal harshly with us and condemn us for our sin. This is a misimpression because the Spirit reveals God's wisdom to us with peace, gentleness and mercy (James 3:17). In fact, one of the Spirit's names is "Comforter" ([John 14:16](#)) and one of his primary traits is peace (Romans 8:6; Romans 15:13).

Another fear people sometimes have is that the Holy Spirit will seize control of them and make them do things against their will. Demons have been known to do such things, but certainly not the Spirit of God! The Holy Spirit is not a controlling spirit. He will lead us when we yield our way to him. He will not shout at us or try to control us against our will. He will gently guide us and tell us what God wants us to do. If we do not heed his voice, he will usually let us do what we want, even though it may grieve God and "quench" the Spirit's operation in us (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

The Holy Spirit is not self-seeking. Every thing he does glorifies the Father and/or the Son (John 16:14). He only speaks what he hears from the Father. He is full of love, because God is love! He loves us with perfect love, which is patient, kind, not envious, not bragging, humble, polite, not self-seeking, forgiving, rejoices in truth (not evil), bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

**Functions:** The Spirit does many things to help us live for God in victory over sin and evil. Two of his primary functions are to:

- **Be our source of new life:** He is the power source that enables us to live as "new creations" while continually casting off our sinful desires and habits. Just as he raised Jesus from the dead, so he also raises us from our sinful ways to live for righteousness (Romans 8:11, 1 Peter 2:24). An important aspect of our new life is its "fruitfulness" for God's kingdom. The Holy Spirit will grow "fruits" in us of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23 [NIV](#)), as we respond to him in obedience.

- **Guide us in all truth:** The Holy Spirit guides us in truth concerning every aspect of life. John wrote that the Spirit convicts us of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). Our responsibility is to obey the Spirit's convictions. He in turn will give us life and strength to subdue our sin nature and live in purity (Romans 8:9-14). He will also tell us about God's plans for us and our inheritance as co-heirs in God's kingdom (Romans 8:15-17).

If we hope to live in victory over sin and serve in God's kingdom, we must have the life and truth of the Spirit to withstand the trials and temptations that may come our way. Therefore, we should take steps to ensure we are "keeping in step" with the Spirit at all times (Galatians 5:25).

**Getting in tune with the Holy Spirit:** An analogy for this is tuning a radio to the right frequency for the station we want to receive. Some actions we can take to maximize our connection with the Spirit include:

- 1. Continually cast off the old self and put on the new self** (see [Old Self New Self](#)): Our "old self" will generate plenty of static that will hinder our tuning in to the Holy Spirit. The most basic way to keep our spiritual tuner clean is to have a daily [quiet time](#) with the Lord that includes [Bible study](#). God's word will purify and sharpen our minds spiritually.
- 2. Practice continuous prayer:** Maintain a prayerful attitude throughout the day and remember to be on the lookout for where God is working around you. Paul said, "[Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests](#)" (Ephesians 6:18 [NIV](#)). This type of "open prayer" dialogue can be a challenge to master, as many distractions can vie for our attention. However, the more we practice it, the better we will become with it. As a result, we'll be more sensitive to God and better able to recognize where he is working around us. (see [Pray in the Spirit](#))
- 3. Yield to the Spirit:** We need to heed the promptings and convictions that the Spirit gives us, no matter how small or insignificant they may seem. Often we're tested in faithfulness with small things before bigger things will be entrusted to us.

The Spirit communicates with us in many different ways. He may speak through scripture, people, circumstances, thoughts or an audible voice. Once we've checked what we hear from the Spirit with the Bible, our response should then be to obey ([Hebrews 12:25-29](#)). Since the Spirit provides critical guidance for us in truth, we can't afford to ignore his instruction!



When we resist the Spirit and disobey his promptings, we will stall our spiritual growth and may even start backsliding into sin. This is a very dangerous thing to do, because we risk being brought into greater deception by the enemy.

Paul wrote, "**But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God**" (Romans 8:13-14 [NKJV](#)). The challenge is to yield our will to the Spirit's will. There will be many times when our flesh will not want to what the Spirit wants us to do. If we persevere and make our flesh submit to the Spirit's will, we will truly move into our inheritance as sons of God. Thankfully the Spirit is gentle in working with us. He will give us tests for faithfulness as we are able to pass them and will not give up on us if we fail.

The issue of trust can be challenging for people who prefer to be in control of their lives. So often we like to know where we are going and what we will be doing. Jesus told Nicodemus that the Spirit moves like the wind, which we don't know from where it comes from or where it goes (John 3:8). When we follow the Spirit, we may be asked to do things that we don't understand. We may be asked to do things blindly with a leap of faith. Instead of leaning on our own understanding, we must lean on the Spirit, trust him and step out.

As we get to know the Holy Spirit and follow his guidance, we'll discover God's blessings filling our life ([Psalm 103:2-5](#)). We'll begin to partake of our wonderful inheritance as sons of God through Christ (Galatians 4:7, [Galatians 3:28-29](#), [Ephesians 1:3](#)).

### **Personal Application Questions:**

- Please describe the personality of the Holy Spirit.
- How has fear influenced your perception of the Holy Spirit and his ways?
- What are two main functions of the Holy Spirit as it impacts our walk with Jesus?
- What sin is highlighted when we resist the Holy Spirit's convictions? How does this affect our relationship with God? (James 4:6)
- How will daily Bible study help you "tune in" to the Holy Spirit? (John 14:26)
- Approximately what percent of your day do you spend talking with God in prayer? What steps can you take to make continuous prayer a reality in your life?
- What are some areas which the Spirit has been convicting you to follow him in? Have you resisted him? If so, please take a moment to confess that resistance as sin (pride). Next, ask God to forgive you and cleanse

you from it. Finally, reaffirm your desire to follow God from this point forward. Here is a suggested prayer to accomplish this:

"Heavenly Father, I confess that I have resisted you in the following areas of my life: \_\_\_\_\_(list). Please forgive me for ignoring your convictions and being rebellious. Please re-kindle the fire of the Holy Spirit in me and give me a passion for purity. Please give me a pliable heart that will follow you. I commit myself to heeding your voice and obeying your promptings from this point forward. Please empower me to obey in every instance by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thank you, Father, for not leaving me as an orphan. Thank you for giving me new life through Jesus! In his name I pray, Amen."

## Spiritual Gifts

God equips each of us with special abilities or "gifts" to edify (buildup, strengthen) ourselves and others. The use of these gifts helps the "spiritual health" of the body of Christ (i.e. all Christians).

Paul drives home this point in [1 Corinthians 12](#), where he explains how Christians form the body of Christ and how the gifts are used within the body. Consider these two excerpts:

*"<sup>7</sup>But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: <sup>8</sup>for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup>to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, <sup>10</sup>to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup>But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He will."*

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 [NKJV](#)

*"<sup>25</sup>that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup>And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. <sup>27</sup>Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. <sup>28</sup>And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. <sup>29</sup>Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? <sup>30</sup>Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup>But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. "*

1 Corinthians 12:25-31 [NKJV](#)

Each person, with their gifts, is part of the body of Christ. In order for the body to function properly, the person needs to be connected with the body and allowed to fulfill his or her role. For example, someone with the gift of discerning spirits could represent a liver in the body of Christ. If that person is prohibited from using her gift to minister to the body, the body will suffer, just as someone would suffer physically from liver failure. This helps us see why the enemy tries to stop the ministry of the gifts of the Spirit. A weakened body of Christ will be less able to fight the devil's forces in spiritual warfare. It also will not be able to effectively establish and expand God's kingdom on earth.

The Bible gives us clear guidance on how to approach spiritual gifts. Specifically, we are to:

- Learn about our gifts ([1 Corinthians 12:1](#))
- Use our gifts ([Romans 12:6-8](#))
- Not lack in any gift ([1 Corinthians 1:5-7](#))
- Pursue love and "eagerly" desire spiritual gifts ([1 Corinthians 14:1](#))
- Avoid thinking our gifts make us better than other Christians ([1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#); [Romans 12:3-5](#))

**What are the gifts?** The most common list of the spiritual gifts is found in [1 Corinthians 12:8-11](#). I've included a short descriptions borrowed from Harold Horton's valuable book, *The Gifts of the Spirit*.

1. Word of wisdom: "Supernatural knowledge supernaturally and divinely applied"\* ([1 Corinthians 2:10](#)). Word of wisdom addresses things that will happen in the future.
2. Word of knowledge: "Supernatural revelation by the Holy Spirit of certain facts in the mind of God"\* (knowledge that only God could know) Word of knowledge addresses information about the past and present.
3. Discerning spirits: "Supernatural insight into the secret realm of spirits...It supernaturally conveys information that could not be had apart from this gift. By its operation we may know the true source and nature of any supernatural manifestation, whether divine or satanic"\*
4. Gifts of healings: "Supernatural healing of diseases and infirmities without natural means of any sort"\*
5. The working of miracles: "Operates by the energy or dynamic force of the spirit in reversals or suspensions of natural laws. A miracle is a sovereign act of the Spirit of God irrespective of laws or systems" and "a miracle is a supernatural intervention in the ordinary course of nature." \*
6. Faith: "A gift of the Spirit to the saint that he might work miracles, or rather receive them." "Those who possess Faith the Gift of the Spirit believe God is such a way that God honors their word as His own and miraculously brings it to pass." "Faith's operation is more passive than active. Miracles' power does things by the Spirit: Faith's power receives or enjoys things by the Spirit."\*
7. Different kinds of tongues: "Supernatural utterance by the Holy Spirit in languages never learned by the speaker - not understood by the mind of the speaker - nearly always not understood by the hearer"\*
8. Interpretation of tongues: "Supernatural showing forth by the Spirit of the meaning of an utterance in other tongues. This

interpretation is not an operation of the mind of the interpreter but the mind of the Spirit of God."\*

9. Prophecy: "Divinely inspired and anointed utterance. It is entirely supernatural...a supernatural utterance in a known tongue" \* It often operates in conjunction with words of wisdom and/or knowledge

Additional spiritual gifts are:

1. Ministry ([Romans 12:6-8](#))
2. Teaching (Romans 12:6-8)
3. Exhortation (Romans 12:6-8)
4. Leadership (Romans 12:6-8)
5. Mercy (Romans 12:6-8)
6. Helps ([1 Corinthians 12:28](#))
7. Administrations (1 Corinthians 12:28)

Discussion of each gift could warrant a book in itself. Unfortunately, there are only a handful of good books written with balanced and accurate teaching about the gifts of the Spirit. We have found a few and you can check them out on our [Christian Books](#) page.

**Discover your gifts:** The Bible encourages us to learn about our gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1). As you step out to discover your gifts, remember that God wants to reveal them to you and that your particular gifts will be tailored to God's purpose for your life. This time of discovery should be a wonderful and exciting blessing for you.

**1. Seek God for guidance and teaching concerning the gifts he has given you.** The word says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5 [NKJV](#)). A simple daily prayer for this could be:

"Father in heaven, thank you for creating me with special gifts to minister to your people. I ask for wisdom concerning my spiritual gifts. Please guide me and instruct me today concerning the spiritual gifts I have. Please help me to be sensitive to the situations I'm in throughout the day and help me sense where your hand is working around me. Please protect me from the deception and temptation of the enemy. Father, I praise you and thank you for including me in your wonderful work on earth! In Jesus' name, Amen."

God will respond through the Holy Spirit by teaching you about your gifts ([1 John 2:27](#)). The Spirit teaches us in different ways. Generally he teaches through scripture, circumstances, dreams, visions, impressions and people. Guidance from these different avenues should always be checked with scripture. God will never lead you to do something that contradicts the Bible's instructions.

**2. Keep yourself tapped into God through a daily [quiet time](#)** (prayer, praise, worship, Bible study). This is vital to maintaining forward momentum in your relationship with God and protecting yourself from backsliding. It will also be helpful to review the Bible's instruction concerning the gifts in [1 Corinthians 12-14](#) periodically as you learn about your gifts.

**3. Obey the Spirit's instructions regarding your gifts.** For example, when my wife was discovering her gift of knowledge, God brought her into several situations where she was to share his word with complete strangers. She obeyed in all but one situation. When she obeyed, she was filled with joy and faith, and she was used by God in awesome ways to minister to the people. When she resisted the Spirit, she felt terrible that she had let God down and missed the opportunity to touch that person's life.

A friend of mine had a similar prompting from the Lord to stand up on a bus during his morning commute and share about Jesus. He did not and missed an incredible opportunity. What he didn't know until later was that there was a front page article in the morning newspaper about Jesus Christ, and that most people on the bus had been reading the paper. My friend grieved the lost opportunity. There was no way to go back in time to recover that particular moment.

Thankfully, God does not give up on us when we don't follow through on his instructions. Our disobedience *will* cause lost opportunities, but it will not cause him to abandon us. He will work with us patiently. Even so, it behooves us to obey his instructions the first time, as we don't want miss the opportunities to bear fruit for his kingdom. If we disobey him habitually, we risk quenching the "fire" of the Spirit, thus bringing us into a time of spiritual dryness.

**Use Your Gifts!** If we stick with the Bible's instruction concerning the gifts, we'll best avoid falling into error. Knowing the guidelines will help us recognize God-ordained opportunities to use them and avoid the devil's deception. Specifically, we should use our gifts:

**1. In love ([1 Corinthians 13:1-3,13](#)):** Love is the essential ingredient to the pure operation of the gifts. When we are not grounded in love, Satan can use us to

bring division, doubt and destruction into the body of Christ. Consider what Paul wrote about love and the gifts:

"<sup>1</sup>Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup>And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup>And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing." 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 [NKJV](#)

When love is absent, pride, selfish ambition and religious control can corrupt our motives. Keeping our motives pure when ministering through the gifts is a continual challenge. We live in a world that is tuned for lust...sex, materialism, gluttony and power are some of the big attractions. These influences can easily rub off on us if we're not staying daily connected with God and keeping vigilant watch over our hearts. Since lust is the [opposite of love](#), giving in to its influences will subvert our love, and scuttle the effectiveness of our gifts.

**2. To edify the body of Christ** (1 Corinthians 14:12): The primary purpose of the gifts is to edify the body of Christ, although they may also be used to share God's love with non-Christians. This underscores the need for us to be plugged into a [good church](#) or at least a small group where we are able to mutually minister to one another through our respective gifts. If we are not involved in such a group, it will be difficult to learn and grow in the operation of our gifts.

The gifts have different but valuable roles and all should work together for the good of the body as a whole (1 Corinthians 12:14-27). When any one gift is separated and exalted above the other gifts, it can be an easy target for abuse. For example, in the scriptures the gift of miracles is always combined with the preaching of the word. This combination provides a powerful inspiration for people to place faith in God. When the gift of miracles is exalted by itself without the preaching of the word, it can easily become something akin to a magic show for entertainment. Another example is the use of tongues in the group ministry gathering. Paul prescribed that when tongues are spoken, they should be balanced with the gift of interpretation of tongues so that all present can be edified (1 Corinthians 14).

**3. In the fear and character of God:** Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way. Paul wrote, "**For God is not a God of disorder but of peace....But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way**" (1 Corinthians 14:33,40). For example, lots of noise and hype in a church service can generate distractions that can get people's focus off God and onto whatever is going on. This too can

cause the operation of the gifts to become more like a show than a time of ministry. I'm not saying that we can't be joyful or exuberant in the Lord's presence, but it needs to be done in a worshipful way. Finding the delicate line between worshipful exuberance and confusion is something that ministry leaders have the privilege and responsibility of determining.

If these guidelines are ignored, it a virtual guarantee that the enemy will try to use the abuse of the gift to divide and destroy the body of Christ.

**What if I don't want the gifts?** God will not force the gifts on you if you don't want to use them. God is gentle, kind and patient (James 3:17; Psalm 145:8-9). He will simply leave them for you like unopened presents under a Christmas tree. Even so, if you don't open your gifts you could be missing out on some wonderful opportunities to be used by God to minister to people. Consider also that your fellow believers in your church or small group would never experience the edification that your gifts could have brought them. A final thing to consider is that you will have to give an account to the Lord ultimately for how you employed the gifts (or talents) that he gave you ([2 Corinthians 5:10](#), [Matthew 25:14-30](#)).

**Can I lose my gifts?** Some people worry that they may have lost their gifts because they failed to seek and employ them earlier in their lives. The Bible says that God gives spiritual gifts irrevocably ([Romans 11:29](#)). That means he will not take a gift away from you, even if you are using it improperly. This does not mean you can abuse your gifts, but it does mean God will be patient and kind with you as you learn to use your gifts.

\* *The Gifts of the Spirit* by Harold Horton

### **Personal Application Questions:**

- Please review the list of spiritual gifts. Which gifts do you think God may have given to you?
- Please re-read 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 and 1 Corinthians 12:25-31, which were discussed above. What happens to the other members of the body of Christ when one member suffers injury and/or is separated from the body?
- What are three actions you can take to get started in discovering your spiritual gifts?
- What is the most important ingredient to the effective use of the spiritual gifts? (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)



- Is there anything holding you back from moving forward to discover your gifts? Please take time now to present these concerns to the Lord in prayer.

## Be a Faithful Servant

It blesses God when we yield ourselves to him as vessels for his purposes. For example, in woodworking when you use the right tool for a job it gives you a unique satisfaction in using the tool that does it best. It reminds me of Tim "the tool-man" Taylor grunting in approval over the perfect tool for the job.

Each one of us are tools in God's toolbox. He has tasks he desires to accomplish on earth that are best done through human instruments. Though he has many tools he could use, there are certain tools that are better than others for each job.

God has designed you with a special purpose, as a special tool for a special job. He has uniquely gifted you with talents, passions and spiritual gifts to best fulfill his purpose for your life. No one else has ever been or will be designed and created quite like you! God wants to help you experience the thrill and satisfaction of finding that perfect niche you were made for.

**What does being faithful mean?** Colossians 3:23 explains what being faithful means: "**And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men**" ([NKJV](#)). Whether we are caring for our elderly parent, making widgets at the factory, or driving the church van, or spending quality time with our children, we are to do it heartily as we would for the Lord Himself.

Having a "kingdom mindset" will greatly help us in being faithful from day to day. A person with the kingdom mindset sees himself as God's servant and is aware that he is under his authority at all times. Jesus illustrated the kingdom mindset in the parable of the talents ([Matthew 25:14-30](#)). In the parable, the master entrusted his money to his three servants prior to a journey. Upon return, he rewarded the two servants who had invested the money. He rebuked the third who had not invested, gave his portion to the most profitable servant, and had him punished severely.

The kingdom mindset recognizes that we will give an account to God, just as the servants gave account to the master. God entrusts resources to us and expects us to put them to use *for his interests*. At the end of the age, we'll have to give an account to God for how we lived and what we did with what he gave us. Paul wrote:

**"Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."** 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 [NKJV](#)

What has God given to you? Consider that God has entrusted you with many things. These may include:

- Family
- Finances
- Relationships
- Body
- Time
- Influence/power
- Authority of Christ (for example, authority over evil spirits)
- Talents
- His Word (the Bible)
- Spiritual gifts

Though we may have taken these for granted in the past or used them selfishly, we can now see them as opportunities to serve Jesus. Applying a kingdom mindset, here are a few examples of how we could employ the above resources for Jesus:

- Setting God-honoring priorities and sticking to them
- Spending quality time in building our family relationships
- Honoring our commitments, keeping our word and not over-committing ourselves
- Taking care of our bodies (eating right, exercising, getting rest, etc.)
- Speaking uplifting words to encourage others
- Speaking thanks and praise to God
- Showing God's love to those we're in contact with each day (work, driving, supermarket, school, etc.)
- Obeying the Holy Spirit's instructions
- Tithing
- Being generous
- Investing time each day with God in a quiet time

In the parable of the talents, the master commended the faithful servant, "**Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!**" (Matthew 25:21 [NIV](#)) Obviously we'll want to be rewarded like the faithful servant in the parable. If we are faithful, God will entrust more of his kingdom to us and allow us to share in his happiness with us.

**Obstacles to faithfulness:** Satan will try to prevent us from being faithful. He may use direct temptation to sin, or he may use a more subtle approach,

appealing to our will and/or intellect. Here are two common obstacles to watch out for:

### **Obstacle #1: Our will**

God gave us the wonderful and powerful gift of a free will. We have the power to choose whether God's will is done in our life or not by the daily choices we make. It's easy to say we're sold out to doing God's will, but the sticking point comes when it conflicts with our desires.

Human nature is to live to please ourselves. Our goals in life will reflect what we are living for and ultimately who is controlling our lives. If we are living to please ourselves instead of God, then we must take action to bring our will into submission to God's will. This should be part of our daily "dying to sin" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:31 and 1 Peter 2:24. Here are some steps we can take:

- Surrender our selfish ambition (Philippians 2:3 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition and vain conceit" [NIV](#))
- Surrender control of our life to God (Matthew 6:10 "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.." [NKJV](#))
- Live to please God instead ourselves (1 Thessalonians 4:1) - Example: Align our life's goals with God's mission

We can accomplish these steps with God's help. A prayer we can pray to address the above issues is:

"Father God, I confess my sin of using my will to block your will from being done in my life. Specifically, I confess that I have \_\_\_\_\_ (list your specific obstacles). Lord I see these attitudes as sin. Please forgive me and cleanse me from them. Lord, please help me die to these attitudes daily. Help me to bring my goals and decisions under your Lordship. Father, may your will be done in my life on earth as it is in heaven. I commit myself to living to please you from this point forward. May I bring glory to your name always by how I live. In Jesus' name, Amen."

If you prayed that prayer, be on guard for temptations to take control of your life back from God. The moment things don't appear to be going the way we want, it can very tempting to grab for control. We must resist this urge and remind ourselves to trust God with the situations at hand. Philippians 4:6-7 is an excellent scripture to call to mind in such a situation.

## **Obstacle #2: Doubt**

Doubt has probably squashed more works for God than we will ever know. The enemy loves to flood us with doubt when we try to be faithful in serving God. God may have shown us a mission that seems like "Mission Impossible" given our present resources. We have to remember that God is with us and will help us tackle God-sized missions.

I'm reminded of how Peter stepped out of the boat in faith. He kept his eyes fixed on Jesus, and didn't let the physical circumstances of the wind and waves deter his faith at first. The moment he took his eyes off Jesus, he began to sink. Likewise, when we fix our gaze on Jesus, we will be sustained by faith in completing the task at hand. As soon as we start looking at our circumstances, worrying and doubting God, we're likely to get beat up by the wind and waves of the enemy. As James said, "**He who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind**" (James 1:6 [NKJV](#)). Nothing weakens faith quite like a storm of doubt!

The power of doubt is based on the lies involved. Satan will tell us many things in attempt to get us to doubt. He'll say things like:

1. "God will not help you"
2. "You're going to go bankrupt"
3. "You didn't hear God correctly"
4. "God has given up on you"
5. "God is punishing you"

In order to stave off an impending "storm of doubt," we must call to mind the truth about whatever lies we're being tempted to believe. For example, here are possible answers to refute the above lies:

1. God will help me; the word says, "For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor you surround them as with a shield" (Psalm 5:12 [NKJV](#))
2. I will not go bankrupt; I have placed my trust for finances in God who is my provider; I have been generous and have tithed on my increase, therefore God shall provide for all my needs according to his riches in glory (Philippians 4:19; Malachi 3:10-11).
3. I heard God correctly; the word says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27 [NKJV](#)). Jesus is my shepherd, I hear his voice and I follow him.

4. God has not given up on me, because he sent his Son to die for me, that I might have abundant life. His Spirit lives in me and will guide me in all my ways (Proverbs 3:5-7; Psalm 32:8).
5. God is not punishing me, because all of God's wrath toward me was taken by Jesus on the cross. I have peace with God and can boldly approach his throne of grace through the blood of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1; Hebrews 4:16).

After we remind ourselves concerning the truth, we can then encourage ourselves in our faith to stand strong. I find the story of Abraham to be very encouraging to my faith. Paul recounts the sturdy faith that Abraham exercised:

<sup>18</sup>Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." <sup>19</sup>Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. <sup>20</sup>Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup>being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised" Romans 4:18-21 [NIV](#)

Abraham stood on God's promise and did not waver in unbelief during the fifteen years between when God made the promise and when it was fulfilled. He was fully persuaded that God had the power to do what he promised. As a result, God strengthened Abraham's faith even more and he kept his promise. Likewise, when we stand on God's word in faith as we strive to be a faithful servant, we can expect to be strengthened in our faith. Though it may seem impossible in the natural, God can work the impossible in the supernatural!

It takes a step of faith to believe that God has GOOD plans for us...that he won't let us down when we step out to serve him. A great verse for encouragement is Jeremiah 29:11, which says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord,"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" ([NIV](#)). Remember that God is a superb planner. He won't give you a mission to complete without being certain you can complete it with his help. He believes in you and has confidence in you!

**Prayer when facing doubt:** "Heavenly Father, Thank you for sending Jesus to die for me, so that I have peace with you and can boldly come to your throne for help. Please forgive me for the times that I have doubted you. I renew my trust in you and ask you to remind me of the truth concerning any lies that I have believed or am tempted to believe from this point forward. As I stand in faith

against the enemy, please strengthen me so that I will not waver. You are my anchor, rock and fortress. Thank you, Father! I praise your name now and forever, Amen."

**Personal Application Questions:**

- What aspects of God's mission for your life do you already know?
- What does being faithful mean to you?
- How close are you to having a "kingdom mindset" in your day to day living?
- What can you do to make the "kingdom mindset" more prominent in your life?
- Considering our list, please make your own list of resources that God has entrusted to you. (leave some space between each item)
- Beneath each resource, write down one or two practical ways you can be a faithful servant with that resource.
- What obstacles has the devil thrown into your path when you've tried be faithful in the past?

**Prayer for faithful servanthood:** Perhaps the most important concept in this page is that we have the opportunity to reaffirm our allegiance to God. If you are ready to commit to serve God as a faithful servant, please take a moment to pray this suggested prayer to him:

"Heavenly Father, thank you for giving me so many talents, resources and spiritual gifts. Lord, I want to serve you with all that you have given me. Please forgive me for using these things in the past for sinful purposes. Please cleanse me with the blood of Jesus from anything that is not pleasing to you, Lord. I offer myself as a vessel for your honor and service from this day forward. I ask that your will be done in my life and I submit my will to yours. Please help me recognize any situation where I am not submitting to your Lordship. Please help me adopt Godly goals with pure motives. Please help me to catch the wonder, excitement and adventure of living for you. I am your servant now and forever. I praise your holy name! Thank you, Father. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."

## Freedom Journey 2 Wrap-Up

We hope that you have found *Freedom Journey 2* helpful. We encourage you to continue on in your walk with Jesus. Keep seeking the Lord in your quiet times. Be encouraged that God has a wonderful plan for your life. Jeremiah 29: 11-14 [NIV](#) says:

<sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD , "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. <sup>12</sup> Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup> You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. <sup>14</sup> I will be found by you," declares the LORD , "and will bring you back from captivity...

As a believer in Jesus, you can claim that scripture for your life. May God bless you and guide you from this point forward! We encourage you to take our [other courses](#) as the Lord leads you.