

# BECOMING LIKE JESUS

## **The Spiritual Dimension**

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# Introduction

- To become like Jesus, we need to grow in every area of one's life in Christian discipleship
- Three key marks of discipleship or true faith
  - Abiding in Jesus' word (Jn 8:31-32)
  - Loving the brethren (Jn 13:34)
  - Bearing fruit (Jn 15:8)

# What is Spirituality?

- The term “spiritual” (*pneumatikos*) refers to the Spirit of God imparted to humans, resulting in moral transformation
- A “spiritual” person is one who is led and taught by the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:15)
- It opposes the “natural man” (*psychikos*) (1 Cor 2:14) and the condition of “fleshly” or carnality (*sarkikos*) in 1 Cor 3:1b
- It indicates that one has been renewed or born again (*gennaō anōthen*) (Jn 3:3, 7-8)
- It results in the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22-23; cf. 2:20)

# Inside-Out Spirituality

- Our root problem is the heart: “the human heart was only evil all the time” (Gen 6:5)
- “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup> I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Eze 36:25-27)
- “I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart” (Jer 24:7; cf. 31:31-34)

# Inside-Out Spirituality

- Jesus corrected the Pharisees for their concern of external religion:
- “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean ‘Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness’” (Matt 23:25-28)

# Inside-Out Spirituality

- The Holy Spirit is involved in producing spirituality in teaching (Jn 16:12-15), guiding (Rom 8:14), assuring (Rom 8:16), giving of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:7), and warfare against the flesh (Gal 5:17)
- All these depend on the filling of the Spirit: “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18)
- To be filled with the Spirit is a command to be “controlled” by the spirit, which implies human efforts

# Be Filled with the Spirit

- By union with Christ: “For this reason I kneel before the Father,<sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his **Spirit in your inner being,** <sup>17</sup> so that **Christ may dwell in your hearts** through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you **may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.** <sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, **according to his power that is at work within us,** <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Eph 3:14-21)

# Be Filled with the Spirit

- Eph 5:18 parallels Col 3:16: “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts”
- “To be in Christ and to be in the Spirit are virtually the same”  
(Snodgrass, *NIV Application Commentary on Ephesians*, 309)

# Counting the Cost / Bearing the Cross

- Disciples walk in the real world today, which requires exchanging the allegiances of this world for allegiance to Jesus alone
- “Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup> What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? <sup>37</sup> Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>38</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels’” (Mk 8:34-38)

# Outside-In Spirituality

- Asceticism
- Monasticism
- Mysticism
- Religious exercises

# Spiritual Disciplines

- Studying, knowing, and obeying God's Word (Matt 28:19)
- Meditating on God's Word (Jos 1:8; Ps 63:1-7; Phil 4:8)
- Private and corporate prayer (Matt 6:7-17; Lu 11:1-4)
- Fasting (Matt 4:2)
- Solitude
- Silence

# Conclusion

- Christian discipleship is a process by which the Holy Spirit empowers and transforms believers to display more of the life of Jesus Christ
- This process involves both the work of God and human efforts
- Christian discipleship is not merely inner transformation but a life lived out in the real world

# Discussion Questions

- Discuss any differences between how ordinary Christians portray spirituality and the biblical description
- Discuss how the “world” can be a distraction to spiritual living. What is the remedy to this problem?
- How would you resolve to strengthen your relationship or daily walk with Jesus Christ?