



Gospel Foundation #1: Assurance of Salvation

Big Idea:

Our confidence in something impacts the implications that it will have on our lives. Likewise, our confidence in the Gospel will impact the way we live as Christians. According to God's Word, Christians can have 100% confidence in their standing before God, but oftentimes our relationship with God is impacted by doubts and uncertainties. The aim of this Gospel Foundation is to move Christians from uncertainty and doubts to confidence in Christ.

Common Questions and Uncertainties

- Who is Jesus?
- What happened when I received Christ? Do I need to do it again?
- Was I sincere enough? Can I lose my relationship with Him?
- Can I be certain that I am going to Heaven?

Share Your Experience of Wrestling with Uncertainties

Everyone experiences uncertainties in their relationship with God at one time or another. What questions or uncertainties have you had about Jesus Christ and your relationship with Him? Share your personal experience.

Consider the Effects of Doubt & Uncertainty

Consider the impact doubts and uncertainty have on relationships. Imagine a new marriage relationship that is filled with doubts...

- Doubts about the relationship: WILL THIS REALLY LAST?
- Doubts about the partner: IS THIS THE RIGHT PERSON?
- Doubts about themselves: AM I REALLY COMMITTED?

What impact would doubts like these have on a marriage? Why?

How could similar doubts have an impact on our relationship with Jesus? Why?

Explore God's Word: Growing in Assurance

Context: John wrote a letter to help give confidence to believers who were becoming unsettled by false teachers (1 John). As you read the portion of Scripture, use the questions to help you discover how John dealt with the problem of uncertainty.

1 John 5:9-13 (ESV)

9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. 10 Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. 11 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

(5:9) What is a testimony? What makes testimony trustworthy? What has God made His testimony about?

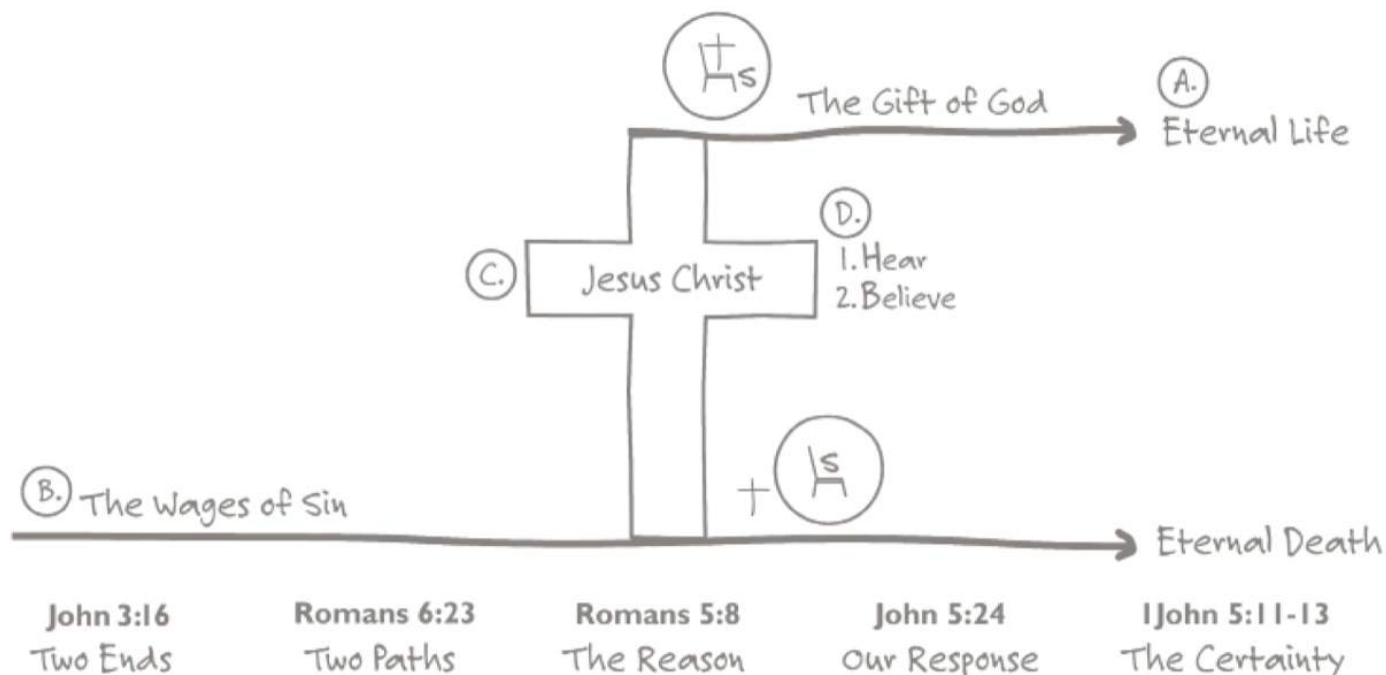
(5:10) In light of God's testimony, what two outcomes exist? What is true if we believe God? What is true if we don't believe God?

(5:11) God's testimony says two things are true? What are they?

(5:12) What two kinds of people are there? Is it possible to have the Son and not have the life? Is it possible to not have the Son and still have the life? Is it possible to think you have the life but don't? Is it possible to have the life but not be sure?

(5:13) To whom is John writing these things? Why does he write them? Does John believe we can know we have eternal life?





Examining the Sketch

A. READ JOHN 3:16.

What two possible destinies are described in this verse?

Which destiny does God desire for us? Why?

B. READ ROMANS 6:23.

What have we earned? How?

What does God desire to give us? How?

C. READ ROMANS 5:8.

What compelled God to give His Son to die for us?

Why did Jesus have to die?

D. READ JOHN 5:24.

According to this verse, what is my part in salvation? How do I receive this gift?

Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. He rose from the dead and is now alive as the Lord of life. Each person who hears the message, turns from going their own independent way, and trusts Jesus Christ to be their Savior, passes from "death" to "life."

E. LOOK BACK AT 1 JOHN 5:11-13.

According to this sketch, where is the person who has Christ?

Where is the person who does not have Christ?

Where would you put yourself on the sketch and why?

On a scale of 0-100%, how sure are you that you now have eternal life?

SUMMARY

Based upon the promises given by God, everyone who has the Son can be assured that they have eternal life with God.

TAKING STEPS

John wrote many other things to help give us confidence:

TO THOSE WHO WERE UNCERTAIN ABOUT JESUS AND WHETHER THEY BELIEVED IN HIM, HE WROTE THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (SEE JOHN 20:30-31).

Read the Gospel of John.

Look for the evidence that Jesus is the Son of God.

Mark the explanations of how we are to respond to Him.

TO THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN JESUS BUT WERE UNCERTAIN ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE, HE WROTE THE LETTER KNOWN AS 1 JOHN (SEE 1 JOHN 5:13).

Read 1 John.

Mark the statements with the word know. Look for what these statements tell us about:

- WHAT WE ARE TO BELIEVE.
- WHAT WE ARE TO DO.
- HOW WE ARE TO LOVE.

"Adapted from the Life Concepts series, by Keith Davy, from Cru Press. Used and modified with permission."



Gospel Foundation #2: Forgiveness

Big Idea:

Christ has not only given us forgiveness of sins, but he has freed us from the power of sin in our lives. We do not have to live in shame, guilt, or feelings of unworthiness, but can experience Christ's forgiveness and walk in freedom. The aim of this Gospel Foundation is to help Christians walk in the light and find freedom from sin.

Illustrate

- How would you feel if you knew you had failed another person who was very important to you?
- How would these feelings affect your actions and responses in the relationship?
- How would it impact you if you didn't know that the other person had forgiven you?
- What difference does forgiveness make in a relationship?
- Sin has a similar impact in our relationship with Christ. How?
- Discuss: Though Christians are forgiven in Christ, we all still struggle with sin and failure. Since receiving Christ, what sin tendencies and struggles do you still face?

Exploring God's Word: From unworthiness to forgiveness

Context: John is writing to a group of believers who have become unsettled by false teachers. In this section, he is dealing with the wrong attitudes about sin in the teaching of these individuals. All of his responses are based on the truth about who God is and what it is like to live in a relationship with Him.

1 John 1:5-2:2 (ESV)

5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

The Foundation of Forgiveness (1:5)

- What does it mean that God is light? What does light do in everyday life?
- How would God's character do a similar thing?

The False Claims (1:6, 1:8, 1:10)

- What does it mean to claim to have fellowship but walk in the darkness? (v.6)
- Why does denying sin show that the truth is not in us? (v.8)
- Why does saying we haven't sinned make God a liar? (v.10)

Three Right Responses

1. The first right response is to walk with God in the light (1:7)

- As we live in a right relationship with God, what is happening to our sin?

2. The second right response is to confess our sins (1:9)

- What are we to do about our sin?
- What does confess mean?
- What does God do as we confess our sins?

3. The third right response is to fight sin and pursue holiness (2:1-2)

- What should we try to do about sin?
- What is the ultimate solution to our sin?

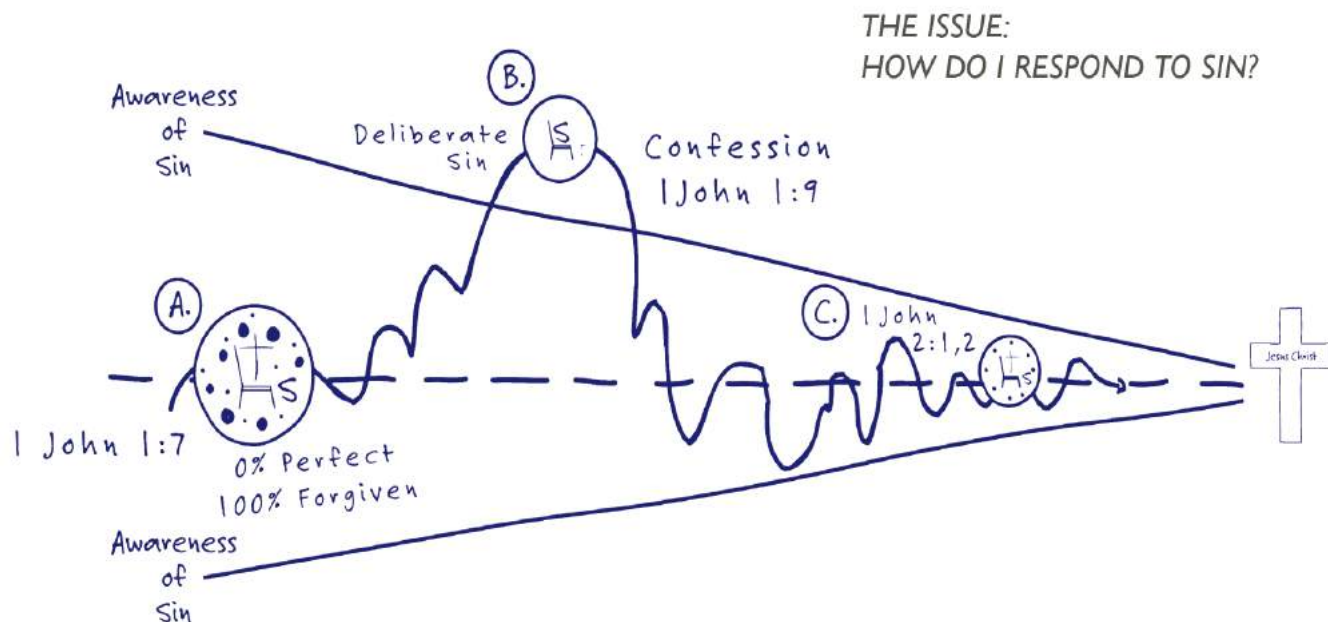
Summary

Three WRONG views of sin:

- My sin doesn't matter.
- There is nothing wrong with me.
- I've done nothing wrong.

THE RIGHT responses to sin:

- Walk with God in light of who He is.
- Openly agree with God about your sin.
- Seek to avoid sin.



Examining the Sketch

A. When I first trusted Christ as my Savior, how many areas of my life were perfect? How many of my sins were forgiven when I came to Christ? According to 1 John 1:7, how does God deal with the sins and shortcomings of which I'm not aware?

B. According to 1 John 1:9, what should I do when I deliberately disobey God and my life passes outside of the lines?

Confession involves agreeing with God.

1. Agree that we have sinned.
2. Agree that he has forgiven it.
3. Turn away from the sin.

C. The longer I walk with God, what will happen to my awareness of sin? Why? According to 1 John 2:1-2, what should my attitude be toward sin? Why?

SUMMARY - To walk in the light is...

1. to live in a love relationship with God in light of His character.
2. to agree openly with God about my sin.
3. to seek to avoid sin as I become more conscious of what is displeasing to God.

Next Steps

1. Claim Christ's cleansing.

Not only does God forgive you and remove sin, but it no longer has control of your life. Jesus removes all our sin and makes us righteous. In prayer, thank God for continuing to cleanse you from all sin.

2. Confess specific sins.

- On your own, make a list on paper of any sin of which you are currently aware. Confess it to God, writing 1 John 1:9 across the page. Tear up the list. This is a visual reminder that Jesus Christ has cleansed you from your sins by His death.
- Confess sin FAST, FULL, and FREQUENT with the members of your Huddle.
 - Be fast to confess when you fall or are tempted.
 - Be full in sharing the extent to which you fell into sin to destroy shame and find freedom. Be specific. (Example - NOT, I have been struggling with temptation. Instead, I sinned in this way... gossip, pride, judging, sexual sin, lying, etc.)
 - Have frequent conversations involving confession, prayer, and spurring each other on to freedom.

3. Choose to fight and avoid sin in the power of the Spirit

Be aware that by ourselves, we lack the ability to change or avoid sin. We must rely on God's power. Not only does God forgive you and remove sin, but the sins others committed against you can now be removed and no longer control your life. Jesus removes all our sin and makes us righteous.

"Adapted from the Life Concepts series, by Keith Davy, from Cru Press. Used and modified with permission."



Gospel Foundation #3: Empowered

Big Idea:

As Christians, we do not rely on our strength, but we are empowered by the Spirit of God to live the new life that we have received in Christ. Though we will never be able to live perfect lives, the Gospel gives us hope for real transformation, and keeps us from despair when we continue to struggle. The aim of this Gospel foundation is to move Christians from feeling unable, burdened, and defeated, to empowered by the Spirit for life with God.

Illustrate:

Suppose you did everything you could to imitate a world-class musician, a professional athlete, or another famous person. The level of frustration you would experience would be in direct proportion to the difference in ability between you and your hero. Jesus Christ is the only one who ever perfectly lived the Christian life. We are to imitate Him (Ephesians 5:1-2). How much difference is there between His ability to live the Christian life and yours?

Because of our relationship with Christ, we have a genuine desire to live the Christian life. Yet we often find ourselves failing to do so. In fact, the Christian life often seems impossible to live.

Discuss: Share with your Huddle about specific times where you feel this tension between your desire to honor Christ and the difficulty of it. On a scale of 1-10, since receiving Christ, to what degree have you experienced frustration in your Christian life?

From Unable to Empowered

When we are frustrated with our inability to live the Christian life, we should consider four possible reasons:

1. We lack the necessary power or ability to live the Christian life.
2. We have the power and ability, but we don't know that we have it.
3. We know we have the power and ability, but we don't know how to use it.
4. We know how to use the power and ability, but we choose not to use it.

In what follows, we will discover the first reason isn't a possibility for a true believer, and we will begin to learn about the power we have been given and how we are to use it.

Exploring God's Word

Context: Paul is writing to a group of believers struggling to live consistent Christian lives. They have become divisive and even formed cliques, claiming to follow different leaders. In this section, Paul is discussing the power or ability needed to understand God's truth. (Circle the word Spirit each time the word is used.)

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9-3:3 (ESV)

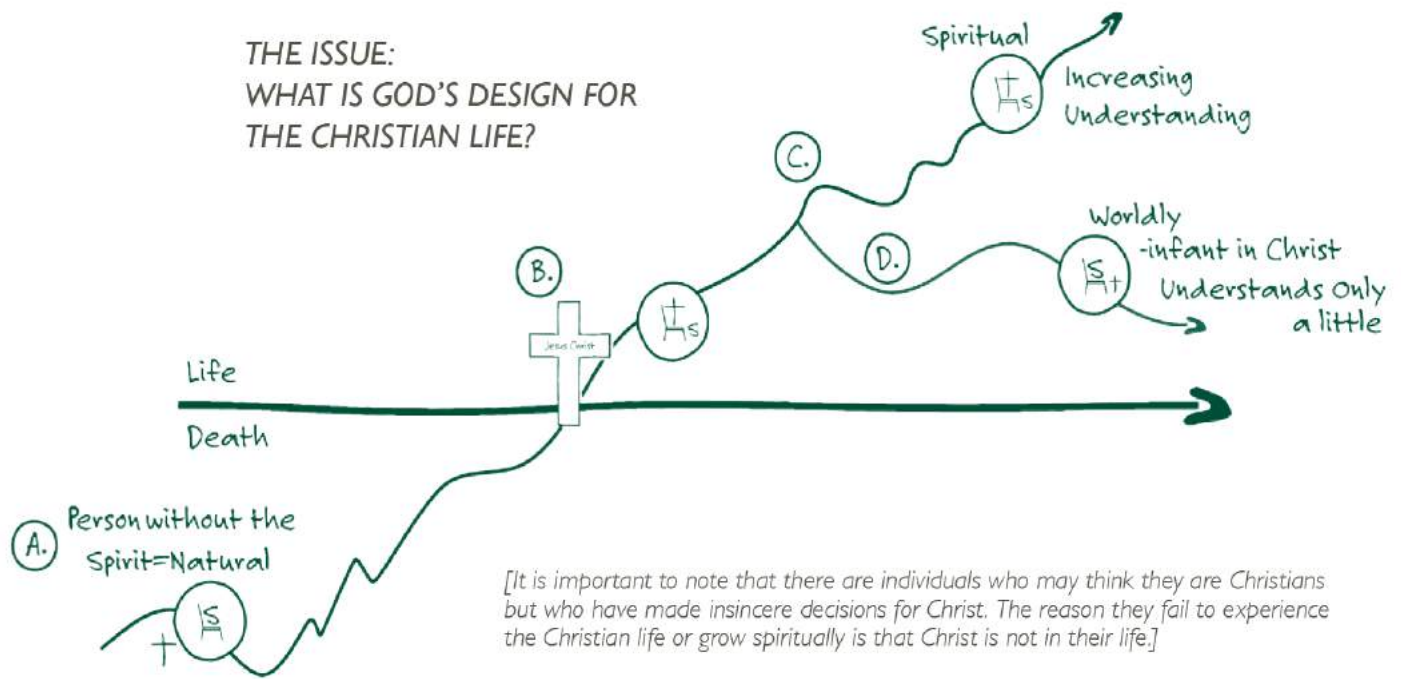
9 But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. 14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. 16 "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" 1 But we have the mind of Christ. But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?

Questions for Reflection

1. The Spirit works in many ways in the believer's life. What is one of His purposes according to 2:12?
2. Three spiritual conditions are described in this passage. Note how each spiritual condition influences the Spirit's ability to fulfill this purpose:
 - What is the spiritual condition of the person in 2:14? How much spiritual truth does this person comprehend? Why?
 - What is the spiritual condition of the person in 2:15-16? How much spiritual truth is this person able to comprehend? Why?
 - What is the spiritual condition of the people in 3:1-3? How much spiritual truth are they able to comprehend? Why?
3. How would you summarize what Paul is saying about the Spirit and our spiritual condition?



THE ISSUE:
WHAT IS GOD'S DESIGN FOR
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?



Examining the Sketch

A. The lower circle represents my life before I received Christ. What was my spiritual condition? What was true of my ability to understand the things of God? Why?

B. When I received Christ and He entered my life, I became spiritually alive and was given the gift of the Holy Spirit promised to every true believer. (John 7:37-39)

C. God intends for me to continue growing in my relationship with Him, learning how to live the Christian life and relying on His Spirit to work within me to give me power and understanding. According to Galatians 5:22-23, what would be the result?

D. But there is another possibility. I could fail to grow in my Christian life and never learn how to experience the power God has given me by His Spirit. What would my life be like then?

SUMMARY

When a person begins a relationship with Christ, it's important to grow in the experience of the Spirit in order to understand spiritual truth and have the power to live the Christian life. God's design is for us to be filled (that is, directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit as an ongoing experience.



Next Steps

Read Ephesians 5:18. What are we commanded to avoid? Why? What are we commanded to do?

The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-directed life by which Christ lives His life in and through us in the power of the Holy Spirit. WE ARE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT BY FAITH.

Jesus pictured believers as coming to Him to drink from the living water, which is His Spirit (John 7:37-39). Are you thirsty? If so, practice this helpful acronym. DRY. Desire. Repent. Yield.

- Desire – Do you desire to be filled (that is, directed and empowered) with the Spirit?
- Repent – Are you turning from known sin and confessing it to God?
- Yield – Are you surrendering control of your life to Christ?

Close in Prayer: As a Huddle, pray and ask God to fill you with His Spirit. Thank Him that He will direct and empower your life as you continue to trust Him.





Gospel Foundation #4: Equipped

Big Idea:

Anyone can experience an inner struggle over conflicting desires to do what is right and wrong. But the believer will often experience this struggle more intensely. For the believer, it involves our genuine desire to please our new Master which conflicts with the old ways we pleased ourselves. It can also involve a conflict between our desire to experience the life God wants to give us and the desire to live life our own way. The good news is that experiencing these struggles is evidence of a genuine change in our lives as a result of our new relationship with Christ. The aim of this Gospel foundation is to move believers from being unprepared to equipped in the battle between the flesh and the Spirit.

Discuss: The Christian life isn't struggle-free. Yet most Christians are unprepared for the inner struggles they will experience.

Since receiving Christ, to what degree have you experienced an inner struggle over conflicting desires—that is, wanting to please yourself versus wanting to please Christ?

From Unprepared to Equipped

- Why do you think most believers are unprepared for these inner struggles?
- How do people feel when they are faced with a significant challenge for which they are not prepared?
- For example, how would you feel if you were enrolled in an upper level language course for a language in which you had never learned the basics?
- In a similar way, we must master the basics of the Christian life to prepare for the challenges that lie ahead.

Exploring God's Word

Context: Paul wrote this letter to a group of believers who were also facing this struggle. They were being told by others that the solution was to try harder at doing what was right by following the Law—the written commandments explaining what is right and wrong. But Paul wanted them to realize they did not have the power in themselves to do what was right or follow the Law. Neither do we.

GALATIANS 5:16-26 (ESV)

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Questions for Reflection

THE CONFLICT (5:16-18)

Who are the opponents?

The word flesh is used for sinful nature. When used in this way, it does not refer to the physical aspect of people. Rather, it is that aspect within people which leads them to live independent of God, in opposition to Him and His ways. Compare Romans 8:5-8.

THE CONSEQUENCES (5:19-23)

The source of our desires will determine the nature of what is produced.

What happens when the desires of the flesh go unchecked? (5:19-21)

What is produced when we walk by the Spirit? (5:22-23)

Notice that the Spirit always leads us to do what is right, never to do what is wrong. (5:23)

THE CONCLUSION (5:24-25)

According to verse 24, how has our relationship to the flesh changed?

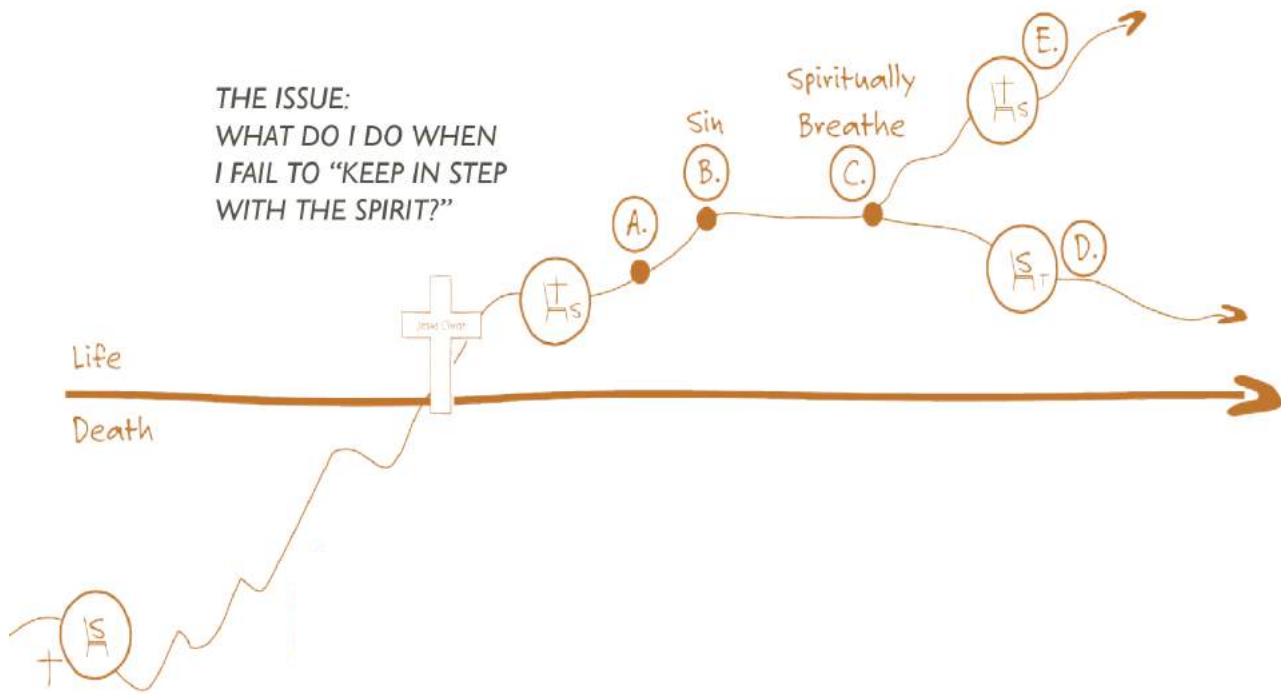
Since we now live by the Spirit, what should characterize our relationship with the Spirit? (5:25)

SUMMARY

What the Bible explains, we should believe. What is true about yourself?

What the Bible commands, we should do. What are you commanded to do?

What the Bible promises, we should expect. What are the results in my life?



Examining the Sketch

As I grow in my relationship with God, there are two common scenarios.

Scenario One (A): Though I sincerely desire to please God, sometimes I become aware of an area of my life that is displeasing to Him, either an attitude or an action. I am not intending to disobey. It's just that I am learning more about what God is like and becoming more aware of sin. What do I do? I simply thank God that He has already forgiven my sins, claim His love and forgiveness by faith and trust Him for the power to change in that area. This allows me to continue enjoying fellowship with Him.

Scenario Two (B): Suppose I choose to sin through a definite act of disobedience. What do I do now? **(C)** To respond correctly to my sin, I confess it to God and turn from it. I acknowledge my powerlessness to live the Christian life and ask in faith for the Spirit to fill me with His power.

A simple way to remember this is by using the word picture of "spiritual breathing." Physically, we exhale impure air and inhale the pure. Spiritually, I exhale by confessing my sin (1 John 1:9) and inhale by claiming the Spirit's power (Ephesians 5:18).

What would happen if I refused to deal with my sin? **(D)** Over time, I would find myself becoming more and more worldly, like the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). But as I deal with my sin and rely upon the Spirit **(E)**, I will become more spiritually mature and see the fruit of the Spirit produced within me (Galatians 5:22-23).

As you look at this sketch, where do you see yourself in this process?



TAKING STEPS

Four steps can help us put these truths into action:

1. **RECOGNIZE** the conflict.
2. **REMEMBER** the source of the conflict—the Spirit's desires versus the desires of the flesh.
3. **REJECT** the desires of the sinful nature.
4. **RELY** on the Spirit's power to produce His fruit in our lives.

Close in Prayer: Is there an area where you are currently struggling? How would you apply these steps? Share this with your Huddle and then pray for God to help you to reject the desires of the sinful nature and rely on the Spirit's power to produce His fruit in your lives.





Gospel Foundation #5: Maturity

Big Idea

God's desire is that His children would mature in Christ, live radical lives of obedience, passionately pursue His purpose, and have an eternal Kingdom impact. However, many Christians never grow into all that God intends for them. The aim of this Gospel foundation is to move Christians from undeveloped to maturity in Christ.

Illustrate

There are two basic reasons why people aren't mature. One is time and the other is health. The world is full of immature people. Some are children who are healthy but have not had the time to grow. They, of course, are normal. Others have had adequate time but have failed to mature either physically, emotionally or socially. They are a source of concern. Their immaturity isn't normal and can indicate either a health problem or an unhealthy growth environment. Spiritual growth has many similarities to growth in the other dimensions of life.

Discuss: The Christian life is a life of growth in our relationship with Christ. Spiritual maturity is attained over time, not in an instant.

How have you experienced growth in your relationship with Christ? And how in what places do you need to grow to look and live more like Jesus?

What is a clear picture of someone who is mature? What is their temperament? Attitude? Desire? Habits?

From Undeveloped to Maturity

- WHY do you think many believers fail to grow spiritually at a normal, healthy rate?
- WHAT might be some evidence of spiritual immaturity?
- HOW would you feel if, after many years, you looked back and realized you had failed to grow in the most important area of life, your relationship with God?

We must have a healthy environment for spiritual growth to ensure that we mature in our relationship with God.

Exploring God's Word

Context: The Book of Acts is a historical account of the first believers' experiences after the resurrection of Jesus. In the second chapter, Peter (one of the early leaders) addresses a large crowd and many become new believers. This passage is about that group of new believers and what characterized their spiritual growth.

ACTS 2:42-47 (ESV)

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Questions for Reflection

There are four characteristics of growing Christians found in this passage:

1. DEVOTED TO THE WORD (2:42)

What does it mean to be devoted to something? Who were the apostles?

What did they teach? (See Matthew 28:18-20)

How could we devote ourselves to this same teaching today?

2. DEVOTED TO FELLOWSHIP (2:42)

What is fellowship?

What motivated the believers to gather together so often? (2:46)

How would close relationships like these help us in the Christian life?

How can we experience this kind of fellowship today?

3. DEVOTED TO PRAYER (2:42)

What is prayer?

What motivated the believers to devote themselves to prayer?

How can we devote ourselves to prayer today?

4. HAVING AN IMPACT (2:47)

Why did other people join them?

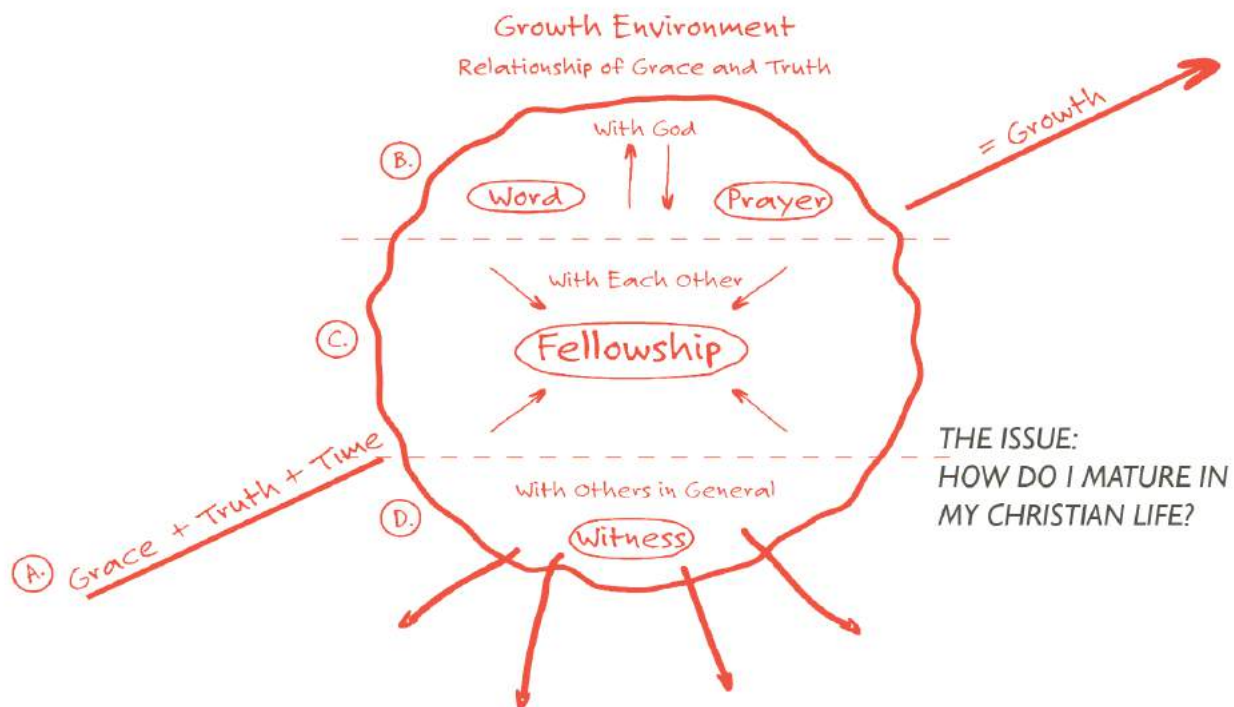
Imagine how exciting it would be if God used your life to influence others to become true believers in Christ.

Examining the Sketch

Consider a seed that is planted in poor soil with little water or nutrients and little sun. How well would it grow?

What would happen if the same seed was placed in rich soil with plenty of nutrients, water and sun?

The difference in growth would be caused by the environment. The same is true for us spiritually.



A. The two primary ingredients that God uses to cause growth in our lives are grace and truth. Truth gives us the understanding we need to live the Christian life. Grace provides the acceptance and encouragement we need to keep on going. But growth doesn't happen all at once. It occurs as a process over time. Thus, the formula for an ideal growth environment is:

Grace + Truth + Time = Growth

Like the new believers in Acts, we experience "Grace + Truth + Time" in the context of relationships.

B. The UPWARD relationship is with God and is experienced through His Word and prayer. At Citylight Church, this upward relationship is represented by our core value of UP, which represents GROWTH.

C. The INWARD relationships are with each other (believers) and are experienced in fellowship. At Citylight Church, these horizontal relationships are lived out through our core value of IN, which represents COMMUNITY.

D. The OUTWARD relationships are with those who do not believe in Christ. Our influence with them is through our witness for Christ. At Citylight Church, these outward relationships are lived out through our core value of OUT, which represents MISSION.



TAKING STEPS

Develop an action plan for each of the relational characteristics of the growth environment.

UP – Growth – Word and Prayer

- Take about 15 minutes each morning to continue reading the Gospel of John and talk to God about your day.
- Use a SOAP bookmark to help you truly digest the Word of God and grow in your relationship with Him.

IN – Community

- Commit to the GATHERED and SCATTERED church. Meaning, prioritize church on Sundays and being in a City Group, a spiritual family on mission.

OUT – Mission

- Identify one or two people you care about who do not know Jesus and begin praying for them.
- Pray and look for appropriate opportunities to tell them about the difference Christ is making in your life.

