

How You Can Walk in the Spirit

by Bill Bright

To walk in the Spirit, one must be filled with the Holy Spirit, be prepared for spiritual conflict, know their rights as a child of God, and live by faith.

Duration: 33:26

Scripture: Psalm 100:4, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28, Ephesians 6:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, James 2:22, 1 John 4:4

Topics: "Walk In The Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of saving his son from falling and relates it to how God saves us from spiritual falls. He emphasizes the importance of letting God control our lives and walking with Him daily. The speaker encourages living by faith and trusting in God's faithfulness, sharing a testimony of how God provided a miraculous solution to a problem. He emphasizes that Christianity is about knowing and relying on Jesus Christ, who is all we need, and encourages gratitude in all circumstances, citing the promise in Romans 8:28 and the command in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 to give thanks in everything.

Transcript

Campus Crusade for Christ International is an interdenominational Christian movement committed to helping fulfill the Great Commission of Our Lord in this generation. Working as a cooperative arm of the Church and with other Christian organizations, our purpose is to help share the Gospel throughout the world by discipling men from every nation. Here is Dr. Bill Bright, President and Founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, speaking on How to Walk in the Spirit.

This lecture is number four in a series of nine transferable concepts, especially prepared to explain how to experience and share the abundant life in Christ. You may wish to share this series with your friends for individual and group study. Breathing is absolutely essential to life.

Under normal, healthy conditions, breathing is instinctive and automatic. Under conditions of physical exertion or emergency, breathing is often labored and always critical. We speak of people gasping for breath or breathing their last.

Since the moment when God breathed into man the breath of life and he became a living soul, breathing has been equated with life itself. Thus the ancients spoke of man's spirit, that part of him that was more than physical, as breath. In like manner, breathing is essential to spiritual life.

Spiritual breathing is one of the most exciting and spiritually rewarding concepts that I've ever discovered. Though not expressed in these words, the concept of spiritual breathing is contained in many passages throughout the scriptures. Understanding and applying this concept of spiritual breathing is to experience constant revival and to understand it has enriched my life as has no other single concept.

And as I've shared it with thousands of others, it has proven equally enriching to their lives. Spiritual breathing, like physical breathing, has two parts, exhaling and inhaling. Spiritually, we exhale by confession.

In 1 John chapter 1, verse 9, we read, If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Confession means to agree with God concerning our sins and involves at least three considerations. First, the acknowledgement that our sin is wrong and therefore grieves God.

Second, the acknowledgement that God has already forgiven us through Christ's death on the cross and the shedding of his blood. And third, repentance, which involves a complete change of attitude, which then results in a change of action towards sin. Spiritually, we inhale by appropriation.

We appropriate all the fullness of God's spirit by faith on the basis of two things. First, God's command, recorded in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 18, which says, Be filled with the spirit. And second, God's promise, recorded in 1 John chapter 5, verses 14 and 15, which says, If we ask anything according to God's will, he hears us.

And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the request which we have asked from him. On the authority of God's command, we know that we're praying according to God's will when we ask him to fill us with the Holy Spirit. And therefore, on the basis of his promise, we claim his fullness by faith.

As you practice spiritual breathing, exhaling by confession, and inhaling by appropriating the fullness of God's spirit, you will be a spirit-filled Christian. You will know what it means to live by faith and to walk in the abundant life of the spirit. How to walk in the spirit through the practice of spiritual breathing is the simple, yet exciting concept I wish to share with you.

While there's nothing complicated about walking in the spirit, there are four important truths that will enlarge your understanding of the principles involved in spiritual breathing and enrich your experience of actually walking in the spirit. First, be sure that you're filled with the Holy Spirit. Second, be prepared for spiritual conflict.

Third, know your rights as a child of God. And fourth, live by faith. First, in order to walk in the spirit, be sure that you're filled with the Holy Spirit.

This subject is dealt with more fully in concept number three. In order to fully understand how to be filled with the Holy Spirit, however, it is also necessary to understand the three different classes described in concept number two, the natural man, the spiritual man, and the carnal man. If you have not yet studied concepts two and three, you should do so as soon as possible.

They're available on film, cassette tapes, and in booklet form. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. We cannot have two masters.

Either Christ or self is on the throne or control center of our lives. In essence, the Christian life is simply the act of keeping Christ on the throne. This is such a simple concept that even a child can understand it.

My wife and I began teaching our sons this great truth when they were very young. One evening when we were saying our prayers together, I asked our then eight-year-old son, Zachary, who is on the throne of your life? He said, Jesus. Next, I asked our then five-year-old son, Bradley, who is on the throne of your life? And he answered, Jesus.

The next morning for breakfast, their mother had prepared a special treat called egg in a bonnet, a delicious thick piece of crisp golden brown French toast with a hole in the middle and a poached egg in the hole. As I was enjoying mine, I looked over at our younger son, Brad, and I noticed that he wasn't eating his. And I said, Bradley, eat your breakfast.

He replied, I don't want it. I said, you'll enjoy it. I'm enjoying mine.

Well, he said, I don't like it and I'm not going to eat it. After a bit of dramatics, he began to shed a few tears. Now, I had to make up my mind what I was going to do.

I could say, young man, you eat that egg or I'll spank you or forget it, I'll eat it myself. However, I thought of a better idea. I asked, Brad, who is on the throne of your life this morning? At that, the tears really began to flow.

When he regained his composure, he replied to my question, who is on the throne of your life, by saying, the devil in me. I asked, whom do you want on the throne? He answered, Jesus. So I said, let's pray.

And he prayed, dear Jesus, forgive me for being disobedient and help me to like this egg. God heard that prayer and Brad enjoyed his breakfast that morning. You see, he had said that he did not like his breakfast before he had even tasted it.

That evening, as we were saying our prayers, I asked, Zach, who's been on the throne of your life today? And he answered, Jesus. Then I asked Brad the same question and he replied, Jesus. Oh, he added, except at breakfast this morning.

This teaching of how to keep Christ on the throne is so simple that a five-year-old child can understand. Surely an older adult as well should be able not only to understand, but to experience the reality of keeping Christ on the throne. Christ is on the throne of our lives when we walk in the control and power of the Holy Spirit.

For the Holy Spirit came for the express purpose of glorifying Christ in the believer's life. Remember that if you are a believer, the Holy Spirit already dwells within you. You do not have to ask him to come into your life.

He is already there. Your body is his temple from the moment you receive Christ. So you simply surrender your will, the throne or control center of your life to him and by faith appropriate his fullness.

Then keep on breathing spiritually. Exhale whenever the Holy Spirit reveals sin, which you need to confess, and inhale by continuing to walk in the fullness and control of the Spirit by faith. Exhale only when the Holy Spirit reveals something that needs to be confessed.

Do not be unduly introspective, looking for sin to confess. If you have confessed your sin, surrendered the control of your life to Christ and asked God to fill you, believe that you're filled by faith and then continue to breathe spiritually. Second, if we expect to walk in the fullness and control of the Holy Spirit, we must be prepared for spiritual conflict.

The Bible explains that there are three enemies which are constantly waging war against the believer, the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world is the enemy without. Now, what is the world? The scripture defines clearly what the world means as we read in 1 John 2, verse 16.

For the whole world system, based as it is on man's primitive nature, their greedy ambitions and the glamour of all that they think splendid, is not derived from the Father at all, but from the world itself. The Bible warns us in 1 John 2, verses 15 through 17, stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you. For when you love these things, you show that you do not really love God.

For all these worldly things, these evil desires, the craze for sex, the ambition to buy everything that appeals to you, the pride that comes from wealth and importance, these are not from God. They are from this evil world itself, and this world is fading away, and these evil forbidden things are going with it. But whoever keeps doing the will of God will live forever.

I do not know of anyone in love with this world who has ever been greatly used of God. There's nothing wrong with money or material success. However, we are to set our affection on Christ and His kingdom, not on the material things of this world.

We are to possess our possessions and not allow our possessions to possess us. The world is a defeated enemy. Christ said, Take courage, I have overcome the world.

The flesh is the enemy within. Scripture declares in Galatians 5, verse 17, For the flesh, that is, the old sin nature, sets its desire against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. For these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

This conflict in our lives will continue as long as we live. All men, no matter how spiritual they may be, are tempted, but temptation is not sin. Temptation is the initial impression to do something contrary to God's will.

Such impressions come to all men, even as they did to our Lord, who was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. Temptation becomes sin when we think about and feel the impression and develop a desire which becomes lust, which we often follow by an outward act of disobedience. Yet this major conflict is largely resolved when we surrender ourselves to the control of the Holy Spirit and face these temptations in His power.

Galatians 5, verse 16 states, Walk in the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Our lives may be likened to radio receivers. Of our free wills, we can tune in the old sin nature, which is activated or stimulated by Satan, or we can tune in the new nature, which is activated by God.

When we tune in the old nature, we receive negative input from Satan, who produces the works of the flesh within us, and ego ascends the throne or control center of our lives. But when we tune in the new nature, we receive positive input from God, who produces the fruit of the Spirit within us, and Christ ascends the throne or control center of our lives. Through the power of the indwelling Spirit and the exercise of our own free wills, we must learn to tune out the old nature and tune in the new nature.

We must walk by the Spirit, and we will not carry out the desire of the flesh. The signal to which we tune will determine who controls us. In Romans 6, verse 16, we read, Don't you realize that you can choose your own master? You can choose sin or else obedience.

The one to whom you offer yourself, he will take you and be your master, and you will be his slave. Our arch enemy is the devil himself. The scriptures describe him as one who prowls around like a hungry roaring lion looking for some victim to tear apart.

It also suggests that he can transform himself into an angel of light. Let there be no mistake about it, Satan is a real foe. A young minister once confided to me that he was afraid of Satan.

I said, You should be afraid of Satan if you insist on controlling your own life, but if you're willing to let Christ control your life, you have nothing to fear. Satan was defeated by Christ 2,000 years ago when Christ died on the cross for our sins. My minister friend happened to live in a city which has one of the largest zoos in the world.

I asked, What do you do with lions in your city? He replied, We put them in cages in a zoo. I said, Satan is in a cage. He is in bondage.

He has been defeated. Visit the zoo and watch a lion pacing impatiently back and forth in his cage, and even if you go up close, he cannot hurt you, but stay out of the cage. If you get in the cage, the lion will make mincemeat of you, but you have nothing to fear so long as you stay out of the cage.

So it is with the Christian. You have nothing to fear from Satan as long as you depend upon Christ and not on your own strength. Remember, Satan has no power except that which God in his wisdom allows him to have.

The Apostle Paul warns in Ephesians 6, verses 11 and 12, Put on all of God's armor so that you'll be able to stand safe against the strategies and tricks of Satan, for we're not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies, the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world, and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world. Satan and the forces of darkness are real foes. We must be alert to the way Satan works, but we need not be afraid of him, for God's word declares, greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.

Third, to walk in the spirit, you must know your rights as a child of God. We need to know how to draw upon the inexhaustible resources of God's love and power. I'm persuaded that it is impossible to walk vigorously and victoriously in the spirit without spending unhurried time in fellowship with the Lord in his word and in prayer.

I'm also persuaded that apart from the regular sharing of your faith in Christ with others, Bible study and prayer, vitally important though they may be, are not enough. We cannot enjoy the full and abundant life which is our heritage in Christ unless we maintain a proper balance between Bible study and prayer on the one hand, and sharing Christ with others in the power of the Holy Spirit on the other as a way of life. Bible study, prayer, witnessing, and obedience are both the means to and the results of the life of faith.

As you are filled with the Holy Spirit, the Bible becomes alive, prayer becomes vital, witnessing becomes effective, and obedience becomes a joy. As a result of your obedience, your faith grows and you become more mature in your spiritual life. In James chapter 2 verse 22 we read about Abraham, the father of faith.

You see, he was trusting God so much that he was willing to do whatever God told him to do. His faith was made complete by what he did, by his actions, his good deeds. But we will not draw on God's vast spiritual resources until we recognize that we have no strength or power in ourselves.

Paul wrote, I want to remind you that your strength must come from the Lord's mighty power within you. As a young man in college and later in business, I used to be very self-sufficient. I believed that a man can do just about anything he wanted to do on his own, if he were willing to work hard and make the necessary sacrifice.

But when I became a Christian, I learned a whole new philosophy of life. My old life of trying was replaced by a new life of trusting. Now I realize how totally incapable I am of living the Christian life in my own strength, and yet I also realize how strong I am in Christ.

As Paul said in Philippians chapter 4 verse 13, I can do all things through him who strengthens me, referring to the Lord Jesus. In John the 15th chapter, our Lord stressed the importance of our drawing our strength from him. He said, take care to live in me and let me live in you, for a branch cannot bear fruit when severed from the vine, nor can you be fruitful apart from me.

Yes, I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever lives in me and I in him shall produce a large crop of fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. All that God expects of us is our availability, our trust, and our obedience.

We are to live holy lives and tell others about Christ at every opportunity, but their response is dependent on the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives, for success in witnessing is simply sharing Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God. Although I've had the privilege of praying with thousands who've received Christ as a result of my witness, I cannot claim any credit for their changed lives, for that is the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I cannot boast over much fruit or be discouraged over little fruit.

Christ's power is available to all who trust him. Paul wrote, I pray that you will begin to understand how incredibly great God's power is to help those who believe him. It is that same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in heaven, far, far above any other king, a ruler, or dictator, or leader.

Yes, his honor is far more glorious than that of anyone else, either in this world or in the world to come. And God has put all things under his feet and made him the supreme head of the church, which is his body, filled with himself, the author and giver of everything, everywhere. Romans chapter six gives the basic facts concerning our identity with Christ.

We're told we are crucified with Christ. We are buried with Christ. We are raised with Christ.

And according to Ephesians chapter two, verse six, we are now seated with Christ in the heavenlies, in the place of authority and power. From God's point of view, this is our actual position in Christ. This being true, God's word admonishes us to live like men of God because of what Christ has done for us.

If we have Christ, we have everything we need. For as the apostle Paul wrote to the Colossian church, we are complete in him. Do you need love? Our Lord Jesus is love incarnate.

Do you need joy? He is joy. Do you need peace? He is peace. Do you need patience? The Lord Jesus Christ is patience.

Do you need wisdom? Christ is wisdom. Are you in need of material possessions so that you can better serve Christ? They're available through him. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

And I would remind you that he has promised to supply the needs of all who trust him. Christianity is Christ, not a code of ethics, not a philosophy of life, not a standard of conduct. You are complete in him.

He is all you need. Therefore, make your first priority getting to know the Lord Jesus Christ better. My wife, Barnett, and I were wading down a shallow stream in Yosemite with our two sons.

I was holding our five-year-old son, Bradley, by the hand to keep him from slipping on the rocks, which were very slippery. Suddenly, Brad did slip and his feet went out from under him. Had I not been holding him firmly, he would have had a very serious fall and possibly would have been injured.

As we continued our walk, Bradley looked up into my face with an expression of radiance and gratitude and said, Daddy, I'm sure glad you saved me from falling. In a flash, it seemed as though God had spoken to me. And I looked up to him and said, Father, I'm so glad that you have me by the hand.

How many times you've kept me from falling. Oh, the Christian life is wonderful. It is exciting.

It is filled with adventure for those who let God control their lives, who draw upon his vast resources, who walk with him moment by moment, day by day, allowing him to hold them by the hand. Fourth, to walk in the Spirit, we must live by faith. How sad it is to see well-meaning, sincere Christians being deceived by a wrong or undue emphasis on emotions.

We do not live by feelings. We live by faith. According to Hebrews chapter 11, verse 6, without faith, it is impossible to please God.

According to John chapter 14, verse 21, valid emotional feelings are simply the byproduct of faith and obedience. One of the greatest acts of obedience is to share Christ with others in the power of the Holy Spirit. Since Christ came to seek and to save the lost and has commissioned us to witness for him, nothing could please him more.

If you want a valid, vital, vibrant awareness of Christ in your experience, begin to share Christ with others in the power and control of the Holy Spirit as a way of life. There is nothing wrong with feelings as such. Thank God we have them.

We need not be ashamed of them. But we should not seek them. We should not emphasize them.

Seeking an emotional experience repudiates the command to live by faith and, in fact, insults God. Further, many emotional experiences are a counterfeit of the genuine experience which can be ours through faith and obedience to Christ. We live according to God's promise, trusting in the integrity of God himself.

It is not our faith, but the object of our faith who makes the difference, and God, who is the object of our faith, has proven himself to be worthy of our complete trust. He has given us thousands of promises in his word, and no Christian has ever found one single promise to be untrue. When God says something in his word, you can stake your life on it.

You can know that he will not fail you. In Romans 8, verse 28, we find one of God's great promises, which states, we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose. Do you believe that promise? If you do, then logically you must accept the reasonableness of the command of 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 18, which says, in everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Have you learned to say thank you, Lord, when your heart is broken because of the loss of a loved one, when your body is wracked with pain, when you receive a dear John letter terminating a love relationship, when you have financial reverses, when you fail an exam, when you receive your summons to report for military duty? Do you thank God when you're discriminated against personally, religiously, or racially? You may say that only a weakling would give thanks to God under such circumstances, but not if all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose. When we say thank you, we are demonstrating faith in God and in his word. You may have become bitter against God or even hated him because of the things that have happened to you.

You may even have asked, why did God do this to me? But God says, in everything give thanks. Before I discovered the secret of giving thanks in everything, I used to lose my patience when things went contrary to my wishes. If doors did not open before me, I was ready to batter them down.

I was sometimes tense and impatient with others. Then I learned this principle of trusting Christ in all things, and I saw how foolish I've been. But God has a much, much better plan.

We can relax when things go wrong. We can say thank you when the whole world seems to be crumbling around us because our God is sovereign and omnipotent. He holds the world in his hands, and we can trust him.

After one of my lectures at Arrowhead Springs, the international headquarters of Campus Crusade for Christ, a young woman came for counsel. Through her tears, she told me how her fiancé had been killed in an accident several months before. They were coming home, she said, from their engagement party, and she was driving the car.

Suddenly, an oncoming automobile crossed the center line, forcing her off the road into a telephone pole. The terrible tragedy was compounded by the guilt which resulted because she was driving the car, and her heart was broken over this great loss. She had gone to psychiatrists and psychologists, ministers, and many others seeking counsel.

She said, if you can't help me, I fear for my sanity. I asked her if she were a Christian. She said yes.

We read Romans chapter 8, verse 28 together, and I asked, do you believe that all things work together for good? She said, yes, I believe that. We turned to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 18, and she read it aloud. In all things give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

I then asked her, have you thanked God for the loss of your loved one? She was shocked, and looking at me in disbelief, she exclaimed, how could I ever thank God for such a tragic loss? Then I suggested, you really don't trust God, do you? Yes, I do trust God, she said. Then why do you not show him that you do, I asked. Will you pray with me and tell God that you trust him, and are you willing to give thanks even for this tragedy? As we knelt together, she prayed through her tears.

God, I don't understand, but I know that I can trust you, and I do say thank you. Early the next morning, she came to my office, literally bubbling with joy. She said, last night I slept without medication for the first time since the accident, and this morning my heart is filled with praise and thanksgiving to God.

I just cannot understand it, but I know that it has something to do with what you taught me about saying thank you to God. Some years ago, there was a desperate need for more than one half a million dollars toward the purchase of Arrowhead Springs, and because of a technicality involving the sale of a portion of the property, our financial world had crumbled, and the whole worldwide ministry and my own reputation were in danger of being destroyed. When word came from a friend that the money which we had been promised was no longer available, I fell on my knees and said, Lord, what am I going to do? I opened my Bible and looked for help and assurance, and I was reminded that all things work together for good, and that in everything I should give thanks.

So through my tears I thanked God for what had happened. I thanked Him that in His wisdom and love He knew better than I what should be done, and that out of this chaos and uncertainty would come a miraculous solution to our problem. There on my knees while I was giving thanks for this great disappointment, God began to give me the genuine assurance that a miracle was really going to happen.

Within 10 days, God did provide an almost unbelievable solution to our problem, a miracle. He demonstrated again that when we trust Him, He is faithful and worthy of our complete unhesitating trust. Learn how to walk by faith.

Trusting God is a growing experience. I'm confident that I shall be able to trust God for greater things tomorrow than those for which I am able to trust Him today. What a great opportunity is ours to walk by faith in fellowship with the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

For many years it has been my practice to begin my day the night before by reading and meditating on God's Word before I go to sleep. Thus my last conscious thoughts are of the Lord Jesus. Then throughout the night when my subconscious mind takes over, I continue to think about Him, and when I awaken in the morning, my first thoughts are of Him.

I usually awaken with a psalm of praise on my lips, with an attitude of thanksgiving, and I commit myself completely to God to be used by Him for anything He wishes to do in and through me that day. Then I slip out of bed to my knees, formally acknowledging His Lordship. Begin the day right, and you too will find it easier to walk in the fullness of His power all day, moment by moment, as a way of life.

Remember, if you want to walk in the fullness of His power and in the of the Holy Spirit, you must continue to breathe spiritually. Exhale and inhale. Confess sin the moment the Holy Spirit reveals it in your life, and appropriate the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Remember, too, these four important truths. First, be sure that you're filled with the Holy Spirit. Second, be prepared for spiritual conflict.

Third, know your rights as a child of God, and finally, live by faith. As you walk in the Spirit, breathing spiritually, you can become one of a great army of effective Christian disciples whom God is raising up around the world to witness and work for, to pray and to plan for the fulfillment of the Great Commission in this generation. And may God pour out His blessing upon you mightily.

Amen.

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