

# Spirit-Filled Scholarship

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS | WEEK TWO

## IN THIS WEEK'S STUDY

1. Discussion Guide
2. The Christian Grad Proclamation
3. "The Spirit-Filled Life"

# SPIRIT-FILLED SCHOLARSHIP

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1. **Read John 15:1-8.** Jesus describes Himself as the vine. How are we to act as branches?
2. What does it mean to abide in Christ? How independent are our choices when we abide?
3. What results are produced? What is said about fruit? How do we get power to produce this fruit?
4. Why should we abide in Christ? Who is glorified when we abide? How do we benefit when we abide in Christ?
5. How is this passage relevant to your graduate studies?

## APPLICATION

Have you ever had an up and down spiritual experience? Or have you ever had an area of your life that you wanted to change, but felt powerless to do so? You don't have to have these experiences. Greater spiritual power isn't dependent on feelings, circumstances, or even 'spiritual maturity'. Remember, you were never meant to be independent, but to rely upon and submit to God.

If you ask God to empower you with His Spirit, He will do it (Eph 5:18, I John 5: 14-15). As you continually submit to and rely upon Him you will experience the Spirit-Filled life. However, if you stop submitting to God by sinning or stop relying upon Him by trying to accomplish everything through your own strength, then you can confess your sins to Him and/or ask God to strengthen you as you admit your dependence upon Him.

As we abide in Christ by being filled with God's strength, we grow closer to Him and experience intimacy and joy (Gal. 5:22-23). We will grow closer to other Christians around us.

# THE CHRISTIAN GRAD PROCLAMATION

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WHEREAS,

- Grad Resources was commissioned with the vision of addressing the needs of the 2 million graduate students in the United States,
- and there is widespread confusion about values and morality in our nation today,
- and there is a tendency toward isolation and fragmentation in the pursuit of an advanced degree,
- and, there is a need for models who exemplify balanced lifestyles and compassionate caring community among graduate peers,

THEREFORE,

- we resolve to personally embrace these elements of academic and personal life and to encourage other graduate students to do the same,
- to live a balanced lifestyle, to contribute to the building of a compassionate community among graduate students,
- to recognize that our calling to an academic pursuit requires a high standard of excellence, both in scholarship and in ethics,
- to acknowledge that our pursuit of this calling must be subordinated to our discipleship in Christ,
- to have reasonable expectations of our academic advisors and to meet their reasonable expectations of us in return,
- to practice honesty and transparency before our graduate student peers,
- to endeavor to grow in compassion and sensitivity toward them,
- to communicate the gospel to those in our circle of acquaintance, both verbally and in action, and in a spirit of tolerance and respect for the free exchange of ideas,
- to give preeminence to our personal walk with God, maintaining that spiritual intimacy with God provides grace for our calling, and that enables us to integrate our faith and our academic discipline,
- to provide adequate attention to the well-being of our families and of ourselves personally, being good stewards of ourselves and our loved ones, with a focus upon the long run, and
- to put forth our best efforts in seeking positions, representing ourselves truthfully, but in line with developed skills and gifts, and awaiting positions as opportunities for personal ministry and influence.

**We hold these things to be true and we welcome the opportunity to be accountable to like-minded graduate students, in order that we might please the One whom we serve.**

TO THIS END WE PLEDGE OURSELVES.

1. To maintain a growing relationship with Christ.
2. To maintain and foster the health of our family.
3. To work ethically and with diligence in pursuing integration of our faith and discipline.
4. To respect and help fellow students.
5. To bear witness to Christ in our words and lives whenever possible.
6. To invest in the Christian community in our church and on campus.

# THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

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We are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith. How did you become a Christian? By faith. "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." (Eph 2:8-9) "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him."

You receive Christ by faith. You live by faith. Everything you receive from God, from the moment of your spiritual birth until you die, is by faith. Do you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? You can be filled right now, by faith.

You do not have to beg God to fill you with His Holy Spirit. You do not have to barter with Him by fasting or weeping or begging or pleading. For a long period of time, I fasted and cried out to God for His fullness. Then one day I discovered from the Scriptures that the "just shall live by faith." You do not earn God's fullness. You receive it by faith.

Let me illustrate. Suppose that you want to cash a check for a hundred dollars. Would you go to the bank where you have several thousand dollars on deposit, place the check on the counter, get down on your knees, and beg, "Oh, please, Mr. Teller, cash my check!" No, that is not the way you cash a check. You simply go in faith, place the check on the counter, and you wait for the money which is already yours. Then you thank the teller and go on your way. Millions of Christians are begging God, as I once did, for something which is readily available - just waiting to be appropriated by faith. They are seeking some kind of emotional experience, not realizing that such an attitude on their part is an insult to God - a denial of faith. But faith is the only way you can please God.

Though you are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith and faith alone, it is important to recognize that several factors contribute to preparing your heart for the filling of the Spirit. First, you must desire to live a life that will please the Lord. You have the promise of our Savior, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

Second, be willing to surrender your life totally and irrevocably to our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul admonishes in Romans 12:1,2: "I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Third, confess every known sin which the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and experience the cleansing and forgiveness which God promises to us in 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful

and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." I call this process "Spiritual Breathing." Just as you exhale and inhale physically, so you also breathe spiritually. You exhale spiritually when you confess your sins.

From the moment of your spiritual birth, you have the power to go on growing toward maturity in Christ. And yet, the average person, not understanding how to live by faith, lives on a spiritual roller coaster, rising and falling from one emotional experience to another.

In Romans 7, Paul describes the predicament of the worldly, carnal Christian, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul describes a worldly, carnal believer as one who acts like a non Christian. Although the worldly believer has received Christ, he also has allowed his Flesh nature to reclaim the throne through sin. God still has possession of this person, and Christ is still in his life, but the individual has fallen into sin in one or more areas of his life.'

Not yielded to God, the worldly believer is usually a miserable person - even more miserable than the non-Christian. He is in a period of stunted spiritual growth because he is not confessing and repenting of his sins, and Satan has succeeded in influencing and controlling him through the Flesh.'

#### **Paul wrote to the Christians of Corinth:**

*Dear brothers, I have been talking to you as though you were still just babies in the Christian life, who are not following the Lord, but your own desires; I cannot talk to you as I would to healthy Christians, who are filled with the Spirit. I have had to feed you with milk and not with solid food, because you couldn't digest anything stronger. And even now you still have to be fed on milk. For you are still only baby Christians, controlled by your own desires, not God's ...In fact, you are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord at all.*

The worldly or carnal Christian certainly experiences the conviction of the Holy Spirit and will not continue in his sins indefinitely; otherwise, he is possibly not a Christian at all. But defeated and fruitless, he depends on self effort to live the Christian life instead of drawing on the supernatural, inexhaustible resources of the Holy Spirit. Grasping self interest in one hand and groping for God's blessing with the other, this person fails again and again to live the Christian life in the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit.

Having experienced the joy and blessing of fellowship with God, he has lost present contact and does not know how to recapture that lost fellowship. Yet, the worldly believer can never be satisfied with that old way of life again, and in search for happiness and fulfillment, this person has become self-centered instead of Christ-centered.

As a result, he has become increasingly confused and frustrated and does not know what to do about it. He does not know how to live by faith - instead he lives by feeling. The worldly Christian tries rather than trusts. He does not know how to stop being worldly nor how to become a spiritual Christian. The only one who can enable him to change is, of course, the Holy Spirit.

The Christian life is a miraculous and supernatural life. Christianity is not what you do for God, but what He does for you. Apart from faith in Christ, you cannot become a Christian, and apart from moment by moment faith or dependence on Him, you cannot live the Christian life. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, Christ lives His supernatural life in and through you.

But the average Christian does not understand how to draw upon the resurrection resources of Christ by faith. As a result, the worldly believer lives in spiritual poverty, not knowing or experiencing his great riches and resources which are his heritage in Christ.

An old Scottish woman lived in the most impoverished conditions in her hometown. Years before, her son had emigrated to America. There he had become a very successful businessman but had never found time to return home to visit his mother.

One day a friend sat talking with the old lady in her sparsely furnished cottage.

"Doesn't your son ever send you money to help with your needs?" she inquired.

"No," the woman shook her head sadly. "He does write me nice letters, though. And he sends me the most interesting pictures!"

The listener was annoyed, realizing that the son was quite wealthy. But instead of speaking her mind, she simply said, "May I see the pictures?" The aged mother proudly brought them out of a drawer. To her visitor's amazement, they were not pictures at all. They were valuable bank notes from America amounting to thousands of dollars.

For decades, the Scottish mother had been needlessly living in poverty. The problem? She did not know the value of those "interesting pictures." She owned the bank notes, but she did not possess them.

In West Texas is a famous oil field known as the Yates Pool. During the Depression, this field was a sheep ranch owned by a man named Yates. Mr. Yates was not able to make enough money on his ranching operation to pay the principal and interest on the mortgage, so he was in danger of losing his ranch.

With little money for clothes or food, his family, like many others, had to live on government subsidy. Day after day, as he grazed his sheep over those rolling West Texas hills, he was no doubt greatly troubled about how he would be able to pay his bills. Then a seismographic crew from an oil company came into the area and told Mr. Yates that there might be oil on his land. They asked permission to drill a wildcat well, and he signed a lease contract. At 1,115 feet they struck a huge oil reserve. The first well came in at 80,000 barrels a day. Many subsequent wells were more than twice as large. In fact, thirty years after the discovery, a government test on one of the wells showed that it still had the potential flow of 125,000 barrels of oil a day. And Mr. Yates owned it all! The day he purchased the land he received the oil and mineral rights. Yet, he was living on relief. A multi-millionaire living in poverty! The problem? He did not know the oil was there. He owned it, but he did not possess it.

I do not know of better illustrations of the Christian life than these. The moment you become a child of God through faith in Christ, you become an heir of God, and all of His resources are made available to you. Everything you need - including wisdom, love, power - to be a man or woman of God and to be

fruitful witnesses for Christ is available to you.

But most Christians continue to live in self-imposed spiritual poverty because they do not know how to appropriate from God those spiritual resources which are already theirs. Like the old Scottish mother before she knew the "interesting pictures" were valuable bank notes and Mr. Yates and his vast ocean of oil, they live in ignorance of their vast riches.

Lack of knowledge is not the only reason that Christians are not filled with the Holy Spirit. Many of them basically do not believe in God's trustworthiness and are afraid to relinquish the control of their lives to the Holy Spirit for fear that God will require the impossible from them - that He will change their plans, ask them to give away their wealth, take all the fun from their lives, make them endure tragedies, or something similar.

An outstanding young minister, a seminary honor graduate, once told me, "I have never surrendered my life to Christ because I have been afraid of what He will do to me." Then he told me how, years before, he had a premonition that, if he were to commit his life to Christ, his parents would be killed in a tragic accident. He was afraid to say "Yes" to God for fear his parents would lose their lives - God's test for him to determine the genuineness of his commitment.

Now does that sound like a loving Father? Who do you think put that idea into his mind? Certainly not God. It was Satan saying, as he said to Adam and Eve centuries ago, "You can't trust God." But I say you can trust God! He loves you and is worthy of your trust. Suppose your child were to say to you, "Daddy, Mommy, I love you and have decided that I will do anything you want me to do from now on as long I we live." What would be your response?

If you were to respond to your child's expression of trust in you as many believe God will respond when they surrender their lives to Him, you would grab your child by the shoulders, glare at them sternly and say, "I have been waiting for this. I am going to make you regret this decision for as long as you live. I am going to take away everything you like and make you do what you hate. I am committed to making your life miserable."

Of course you would not respond like that to your child's trust in you. I expect, instead, you would put your arms around your little child and say, "I love you, too, and I deeply appreciate this expression of your love for me. It is the greatest gift which you could give me."

God has proven over and over again that He is a loving God. He is worthy of your trust. Jesus assures you, "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!"

Many people come to me for counsel concerning God's will for their lives. Often they are fearful of what God will ask them to do. Usually I ask them, "Do you believe that God loves you? Do you believe that He has a wonderful plan for your life? Does He have the power to guide and bless your life if you place your trust in Him?" As a rule, the answers are in the affirmative. I then ask them, "Are you willing to trust Him right now to direct and empower you to live a holy life and to be a fruitful witness for Christ?" By this time most of them are ready to say "Yes" to Him without reservation. They have begun to recognize that their feelings of doubt have been placed there by the enemy of their souls.

When you give your life to Christ, you need not worry about what is going to happen to you. Maybe you are afraid that He will take away your pleasures, cause you to leave your business or profession, take away your wealth, or terminate a friendship or love affair. You may fear that He will send you, as a missionary, to some remote part of the world where you will lose your life for Him.

He may indeed ask you to do one or more of these things, and again He may not. If He does, you will rejoice in the privilege, for God always blesses those who trust and obey Him. The happiest people I meet are not those who have all the best of what this world has to offer - or those who have achieved great success in their professions - or those who are in great positions of power and influence. The happiest people I meet are those who have learned to totally trust and obey God in their lives no matter their circumstances.