

LESSON 8

# The Holy Spirit at Work

*You Are Not Alone in This.*

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The Spirit is forming you from the inside. Your part is to keep your face turned toward Jesus.

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## WATCH BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Scan to watch the Lesson 8 teaching video – a 12-minute companion to this lesson.

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## CORE SCRIPTURE

*We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

—2 Corinthians 3:18

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## Who's Doing the Changing?

A few months in, you've probably noticed something. You were told that following Jesus would change you, and you believed it and wanted it. So, you've tried. You set the alarm earlier. You bit back the sharp word. You sat down with the Bible open, and your phone face down, and willed yourself to care. Some weeks it works. A lot of weeks, it doesn't, and you walk away wondering whether you're doing this wrong or just not the kind of person it takes.

Underneath all that effort is a question: who is supposed to be doing the changing here? Because if it's you, if becoming like Jesus is a project you manage by trying harder, then your spiritual life is only ever as strong as your worst week. That's exhausting, and it isn't the gospel.

Last week, we ended on a sentence we promised to come back to. Christ is being formed in you, Paul said, and the verb was passive. Christ is the one being formed; you're the room where it happens. Which left a question hanging in the air: if you're not the one doing the forming, then who is? This lesson is the

answer. The One doing the slow work in you has a name. He is the Holy Spirit, and the good news of this lesson is that the change was never yours to manufacture. Someone moved in to do it. You are not alone in this.

*DISCUSSION: Where have you been quietly assuming that your growth depends mostly on how hard you try? What does that assumption do to you on a bad week?*

## The One Who Moved In

**FIGURE 8.4** **The One Who Moved In**

*Not a rulebook and good luck. God himself, living in you.*

**ROMANS 8:9** **"The Spirit of God lives in you."**  
*Not visits. Lives.*

**1 CORINTHIANS 6:19** **"Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit."**  
*You are his dwelling place.*

**JOHN 14:16** **"Another Counselor, to be with you forever."**  
*A Person, fully present.*

**Not a head start for the disciplined. God lives in you.**

Lesson 8 2 Corinthians 3:18 Romans 8:9 Galatians 5:22-25 Romans 8:16

When you became a Christian, God didn't hand you a rulebook and wish you luck. He moved in. Paul says: "You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you" (Romans 8:9). Not just visits you. Lives in you. A few verses later, he presses the point further. The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead now lives in your ordinary life (Romans 8:11). "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

We come from a religious tradition that loves the Bible and wants to believe exactly what it says, no more and no less. So, let's take Scripture at its word right here: it presents the Spirit not as a force or a feeling but as a Person: God himself, fully present, whom Jesus called "another Counselor to be with you forever" (John 14:16). *Another Counselor*, like Jesus, but now with you always, not across a table in Galilee but inside your own life. Our high regard for the word isn't a reason to keep the Spirit at arm's length; it's the very thing that lets us welcome him exactly as he is.

You don't have a head start on holiness because you happen to be disciplined. You have God living in you. That changes who is responsible for the outcome.

*DISCUSSION: When you picture the Holy Spirit, what comes to mind, and how closely does that picture match the Person Scripture describes? Where did your picture come from?*

## How the Change Happens

If the Spirit is the one doing the work, how does he do it? Paul gives us the clearest picture in a single sentence:

*We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18).*



Now, let's focus on the two verbs in the verse. We are looking. And we are being transformed. The first is something you do. You keep your face turned toward Jesus, in the word, in prayer, at the Lord's table, among his people. The second is something done to you. You don't transform yourself by gritting your teeth in front of the mirror; you're transformed while you look, by Someone else, on a timeline you don't set. And Paul names him at the end of the sentence, so there's no confusion: this is from

the Lord who is the Spirit.

**DISCUSSION:** "Being transformed" is passive. It happens while you keep your face turned toward Jesus. What does "keeping your face turned" look like in a normal week of your actual life?

## Fruit, Not Manufacture

This is why the Bible calls the result fruit.

*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*  
(Galatians 5:22–23)

Notice it doesn't say the achievements of the disciplined Christian. Fruit is something a living thing produces from the inside, in season, because of what it's connected to. No apple tree strains to make apples. It stays rooted, stays watered, stays in the light, and in time the fruit comes.

**FIGURE 8.2** **Rowing vs. Sailing**

ROWING	SAILING
<p><b>Manufacture</b></p> <p><i>"Your own strength. Your own burning arms."</i></p> <p>You make the power Strain toward exhaustion Only as far as you can drag it</p>	<p><b>Cooperate</b></p> <p><i>"Catch a wind you did not make."</i></p> <p>The Spirit is the wind You raise the sail Keep in step (Gal 5:25)</p>
<p><b>You don't manufacture the wind. You raise the sail.</b></p>	
<p><small>Lesson 8 2 Corinthians 3:18 Romans 8:9 Galatians 5:22-25 Romans 8:16</small></p>	

Picture two ways to cross a lake. You can row. Your head is down, arms burning, the boat moving only as far as your own strength can drag it. Or you can raise a sail and catch a wind you did not make. A lot of Christians row themselves toward exhaustion, convinced the burning in their arms is what faithfulness is supposed to feel like. The Spirit offers another way. You don't manufacture the wind, but you do raise the sail. That's what Paul means a few verses later:

*If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in*

*step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25)*

When some of us hear that the Spirit does the changing, a worried thought arises: *So, I just sit back and do nothing?* No. That isn't it either. The opposite of striving isn't laziness; it's a trust that gets up in the morning and does something. Keeping in step is real effort. But it's the effort of cooperation, not the effort of carrying the whole weight yourself. Your part is everything you've been learning since your first week: the word, prayer, confession, and the gathered church. None of those things earns the change. They're simply how you raise the sail and stay where the wind is blowing.

*DISCUSSION: Where in your life have you been rowing, straining to produce a change by sheer effort, when the invitation is to raise the sail instead? What would cooperating with the Spirit look like there this week?*

## You Are Not Alone in This

There's one more thing the Spirit does, and for a new believer it may be the most important of all. He doesn't only change you; he reassures you. You'll have the hard days: the morning after the argument you didn't handle well, the week the old temptation won again, the quiet Sunday when everyone around you seems to feel something you just don't. On those days, the old voice whispers that you were never really God's to begin with. Hear what Paul says to that: "The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children" (Romans 8:16).

And it goes further than reassurance. On the days the words won't come, when you sit down to pray and have nothing but a sigh, you still aren't praying alone. "The Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings" (Romans 8:26). When you don't know what to ask, he carries what you can't put into words straight to the Father. Your most wordless prayer is never the end of the conversation.

**FIGURE 8.3** **How You Raise the Sail**

**WHAT COOPERATION LOOKS LIKE this week**

- 1 THE WORD**  
"Open it, even on a dry day."  
Keep your face turned toward Jesus.
- 2 PRAYER**  
"Keep talking, even the tired prayer."  
Stay in the conversation.
- 3 CONFESSION**  
"Bring it back into the light."  
Honesty keeps the sail up.
- 4 THE GATHERED CHURCH**  
"Show up with God's people."  
The sail fills in company.

**These don't earn the change. They keep you in the wind.**

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The same Spirit doing the slow work of forming you is also the steady, inner witness that you belong. You are pursued, held, and kept by God even now, mid-mess, unfinished. You were never meant to do this alone, and the truth is, you never have been, not for a single day of it.

So, remember this. You are not the engine of your own transformation, and thank God for that; you couldn't have carried it, and you don't have to. The One who began this work lives in you to finish it. He is patient, and he is

not going anywhere. There's no version of this where you try hard enough to make him stay, and no version where you fail badly enough to drive him out. He came to finish what he started, and he finishes what he starts. "It is God who is working in you both to will and to work" (Philippians 2:13).

The Spirit is forming you from the inside. Your part is to keep your face turned toward Jesus.

*DISCUSSION: Read Romans 8:16 again slowly. When you most doubt that you belong to God, where could you go this week to let the Spirit's reassurance reach you: Scripture, a brother or sister, prayer?*

He moved in. He is at work. He will not leave. That's enough to walk on for the rest of your life.

#### DON'T FORGET



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