

FORGET ABOUT HIS WILL FOR YOUR LIFE!

For more information on the material in this session, read chapter 6 of the book *Forgotten God*.

What are you going to accomplish with your life? That's a big question; maybe we can break it down into something a little easier: What's your five-year plan? Maybe you can answer that question, no problem. Or maybe you feel sick to your stomach when you have to make plans for the weekend.

Probably the most-asked question at graduations is, "What are you going to do with your life?" For whatever reason, we tend to focus on what we can and should do in the future, rather than what we can and should do today.

This often bleeds over into our relationship with God. Most of the college students I have counseled have a common problem: "I want to follow God, but I just can't figure out His will for my life." This can be such a huge preoccupation that they don't consider what God wants them to do right now, in the situations that He has placed them in at this moment.

1. Why might it be safer to commit to following “God’s will for your life” rather than following God in what He may lead you to do today?

There’s nothing wrong with pursuing what God would have you do with your life, but sometimes we get so scared about missing our calling for the future that we become paralyzed in the present. God does have a plan for each of our lives, but He has never promised to reveal that plan to us in advance.



If you have the *Forgotten God DVD Study Resource*, watch the video for session 6, particularly if you are meeting with a group. After the video, come back and work through the rest of this section.

2. The video poses an important question: If you were absolutely, 100 percent submitted to the will of God at this moment, what do you think He might ask you to do?

The moment you heard that question, maybe you knew exactly what God would want you to do. He's been calling you to it for a long time, but you've been writing it off as anything but the voice of God. If that's the case, consider leaving this study and following the Spirit in whatever He's leading you to do. Don't let this workbook be one more thing that keeps you from obeying the voice of God.

However, that may be a tough question for you to answer. You may have no idea what God "might" call you to. But that's not really the point. Generally speaking, the answer is not as important as the question. Daily considering and pursuing the Spirit's leading in our lives is crucial.

Read Romans 8:1-13.

In Romans 7, Paul discusses the impossibility of obedience in the flesh: "I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out" (v. 18). This is a hopeless situation. But what is impossible in Romans 7 is made possible in Romans 8. What makes the difference? The Holy Spirit.

"The Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death" (8:2). According to Romans 8, the difference between trying and failing, and truly obeying God has everything to do with following the Spirit's leading.

3. In verses 5-8, Paul talks about the difference between the mind set on the flesh and the mind set on the Spirit. Think about this difference. Give an example of what each type of person looks like.

4. Look at verses 9–13. What things does Paul mention that set the Spirit-filled person apart?

5. What do you think it means to “by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body” (v. 13)?

Paul refers to this process of following the Spirit’s leading as walking “according to the Spirit” in Romans 8:4 and walking “by the Spirit” in Galatians 5:16 and 25. The concept of walking is so basic that perhaps you’ve never considered what walking entails. Think about how simple it is: You don’t have to know exactly where you’re going; it doesn’t require any planning; all you have to do is put one foot in front of the other. Really, the only way to walk is one step at a time.

We can get so caught up in the big picture that we lose sight of the fact that God is simply calling us to walk. It won’t necessarily be easy, but we can always put one foot in front of the other.

6. Think about the analogy of walking. Practically, what would it mean for you to walk by the Spirit in your daily life?

When we walk by the Spirit, we are moving in a particular direction, and that direction is set by the Spirit. As we discussed in session 4, our motivation in desiring the Spirit is important. Walking by the Spirit is not about adding the Spirit into your already busy life:

The Spirit who raised Christ from the dead is not someone we can just call on when we want a little extra power in our lives. Jesus Christ did not die in order to follow *us*. He died and rose again so that we could forget everything else and follow Him to the cross, to true Life. (*Forgotten God*, 122)

There is a real difference between adding the Spirit to your life and actually following Him minute by minute. If you add the Spirit to your life, you're not open to change; you just want to enhance what you're already doing. This is not what the Spirit came to do.

On the other hand, if you begin following the Spirit's leading in your life, you will find yourself changing. The Spirit may prompt you to let go of things that were once important to you. He may even call you to give up some good things in your life, at least for a time, in order to accomplish His purposes in and through you.

7. The thought of being called to give things up may be scary, but honestly answer this question: Which is more frightening to you, giving up everything you own, or going through life on your own without the Holy Spirit? Why do you say that?

I don't mean to give the impression that you always have to choose between the two. But it's an important question to ask yourself, because anything that you value more than God is an idol. The rich young ruler in Mark 10:17–22 didn't realize what was keeping him from God

until Jesus asked him a similar question. By definition, submitting to the Spirit's leading means giving up control.

Sometimes we get the impression that being Spirit-filled doesn't require continued action. It's important to recognize that being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time act. When we put our faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit begins living within us, and we are sealed in Him (Eph. 1:13). That will never change. Yet even those who have received the Spirit of God are called to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

Being filled with the Spirit is really a lifelong process. The Holy Spirit will be working in us continually until the day we leave this earth: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). The implication is that this is not an event; it's an ongoing relationship in which the Spirit continues to work in us to make us the people He wants us to be.

8. Though we might wish that being Spirit-filled were as easy as an event, what are the benefits of maintaining an ongoing relationship with the Holy Spirit?

Walking by the Spirit comes down to daily dependence on God. Sometimes the struggle with sin seems hopeless, but remember that if you are actively walking in the Spirit, you won't sin (Gal. 5:16). This doesn't necessarily mean that your struggle with sin will get easier, but it does provide hope. You may find a particular sin difficult to resist, but as you become more sensitive to the Spirit's leading, you will begin doing the things that He leads you to do. He will never lead you into sin, so anytime you fall into sin, you are disregarding the Spirit's leading in your life. I'm not claiming that it will suddenly be easy, but as you begin following the Spirit's leading more and more, you will see sin in your life less and less.

9. Identify a particular sin in your life. What would it look like to be Spirit-led in a moment of temptation? (If you're working with a small group, you won't be asked to name the specific sin unless you feel it would be beneficial for the group.)

We all know people who are daily walking by the Spirit. These people are actively maintaining their relationship with God and constantly opening themselves to follow the Spirit's leading, whatever that may mean. The most difficult part is the daily maintenance.

Most of us are excited about submitting to the Spirit in an abstract sense. We enjoy the thought of being filled with the Spirit. But how often do you consider the way the Spirit might be leading as you spend time with your family? What might the Spirit want you to say to the people you work with? Have you thought about how the Spirit might want you to shape your budget? These are all practical areas that we rarely consider submitting to the Spirit.

10. Think about some of these mundane daily activities. In which of these are you prone to do your own thing without considering how the Spirit might lead you?

11. How can you turn these activities into opportunities to follow the Spirit's leading?

As we discuss the Spirit-filled life, there can be a real pressure to try harder in our own strength to produce the "fruit of the Spirit" mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. Maybe studying the Holy Spirit has made you feel even more overwhelmed, like you'll never be the kind of person that God wants you to be. If that's the case, then you're not seeing an important truth: *All of this life-change and obedience comes through the power of the Spirit.*

Everything we've been discussing could sound exhausting, but we have to remember that God is not calling us to do this in our own strength. Certainly the Spirit guides and directs us, but it's vital to remember that He also empowers us. Paul rebuked the Galatian churches for trying to grow in their own strength: "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:3). And though it's a confusing thought; He actually called the Philippians to actively work *because* God was working in them (Phil. 2:12-13). I don't know exactly how it all fits together, but as we follow the Spirit's leading in our lives, He also provides the strength and power to walk.

12. We have a tendency to try to do the Spirit's work in our own strength.

Practically, how can you do the work of the Spirit through the power of the Spirit?

13. Spend some time in prayer. Ask God what He wants you to do—not in five years, but right now, today. Pray for strength to follow the Spirit's leading in whatever He may be calling you to do.

REFLECTIONS ON ...

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