

The Ten Basic Steps: Step #1: The Christian Adventure

Lesson 2-The Christ-Controlled Life

Objective: To show how the indwelling Christ is the key to the Christian life.

Read: I Corinthians 2:11, 3:5, Galatians 5:16-24

Memorize: Philippians 4:13

1. The Non-Christian or Natural Man
2. The Spiritual or Christ-Controlled Christian
3. The Worldly Christian and the Solution
4. Life Application

There is a throne, a control center -- the intersection of one's intellect, emotions, and will -- in every life. Either self or Christ is on that throne. Let me illustrate.

I like to plan as far in advance as possible, especially for key events. But occasionally I get so busy with the many details of our worldwide ministry that an important item slips through. With a key conference only a couple of weeks away, I had realized the need for a set of printed materials that would be of tremendous benefit to the attendees.



As I shared the urgency with the department director responsible for this need, he responded, "Bill, we're full up already. Two weeks just isn't enough time."

I became impatient. Couldn't my associate see that we are in a war for men's souls, that we must seize opportunities when they arise and not limit our efforts to 8-to-5 workdays? I made my point clear to him.

"But if we had more notice...", he protested. "There just is not a way we can squeeze in such a huge job with so little time. There's the writing, then the design, typesetting, and artwork, then the printing..."

It seemed obvious that he did not share my burden for the upcoming event. I pressed my point. "Look, this is an important international conference," I said firmly, my voice rising. "And this is no time for 'business as usual.' Please find a way to finish this project in time for the conference, even if you have to work around the clock."

I could tell that my colleague was frustrated. But I reasoned, *We need those printed materials. Whatever it takes, we need them.*

Within a few moments after our conversation, I sensed the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Yes, even in our well-intended service of the Lord, we can stumble -- and in the name of godliness I had offended a dear brother in Christ. I had failed to give him and his staff the benefit of the doubt -- failed to take into account the tough workload they already were facing each day.

Instead of asking him to think through the possibilities with me and helping him rearrange his priorities to accommodate the new task, I had virtually ordered him to get the project done and shown little appreciation for the many late evenings his team was already devoting to their work. I had reacted impatiently rather than in a spirit of love, understanding, and teamwork.

At this point I had a choice to make.

On the one hand, I could let it go. After all, doesn't the head of a large organization have the right to ramrod projects through when necessary? Didn't the end (the strategic international conference) justify the means (get the job done no matter what it takes)? And didn't my associate's hesitant attitude warrant a stern talking-to about the urgency of the hour?

By all human standards, I probably could have justified letting the incident go. But deep inside I would have been restless and uncomfortable as the Holy Spirit continued to point out my sin to me, and God would not have blessed my efforts on His behalf as long as this sin remained unconfessed. On top of that, several of my dear co-workers would have continued to hurt as a result of my callous attitude.

On the other hand, I could deal with the problem by taking scriptural action to clear the slate. The unrest in my conscience was the Holy Spirit cross-examining me as I tried to rationalize my behavior. What I had thought was forceful leadership, He was identifying as the sings of impatience and unjustifiable anger.

I knew that taking scriptural action was the only choice I could make that would please my Lord. I confessed my sin to Him and appropriated His forgiveness. Then came the toughest part.

I drove down to the office complex where my associate and his team were located and asked their forgiveness. We cried and laughed and prayed together, sensing a fresh outpouring of God's love in our midst. Then we talked through our mutual needs and found a way -- as teammates -- to rearrange priorities and accomplish the task -- on time!

That is what the Christian life is all about -- just keeping Christ on the throne. You do this when you understand how to walk in the control and power of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit came for the express purpose of glorifying Christ by enabling the believer to live a holy life and to be a fruitful witness for our dear Savior.

Many people have misconceptions about the Christian life. Some argue that once they have received Jesus Christ into their lives by faith, it is up to them to live a life pleasing to God in their own strength. Others believe that Christ has entered their lives to help them live and work for God's glory. These ideas of Christian living look good on the surface, but each contains a weakness that actually undermines the basis of vital Christian living.

In light of Romans 7:18, Galatians 2:20, and Romans 1:17, what do you think the basic approach should be?

Someone said, "The Christian life is not difficult -- it is impossible." Only one person has ever lived the Christian life, and that was Jesus Christ. Today He desires to go on living His life through Christians whom He indwells. J.B. Phillips, in the preface to his translation of a portion of the New Testament, *Letters to Young Churches*, said:

"The great difference between present-day Christianity and that of which we read in these letters is that to us it is primarily a performance, while to them it was a real experience. We are apt to reduce the Christian religion to a code, or at best a rule of heart and life. To those men it is quite plainly the invasion of their lives by a new quality of life altogether. They do not hesitate to describe this as Christ "living" in them.

Before His death, Christ told His disciples that it was best for Him to leave them so that the Spirit of God might come to dwell in each of them (John 14:16-20, 16:7). In other words, Christ was physically departing from His disciples so that He might always be present spiritually within each of them.

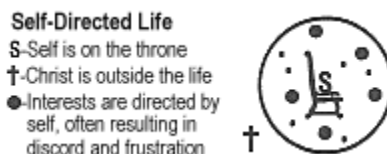
Today when a person places his faith in Christ, Christ comes to dwell within him by means of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). His purpose for dwelling in us is that He might live His life through us. Many Christians are trying to operate on their own finite ability instead of Christ's infinite power.

Have you ever asked yourself, *How can I experience the victorious life of Christ?* To find the answer, let's examine the three types of persons in the world today: the non-Christian (natural man), the spiritual Christian, and the worldly or carnal Christian.

The Non-Christian or Natural Man

Why are many Christians not filled with the Holy Spirit?

In the following diagram, this circle represents the life of the person who has never received Christ as Savior and Lord. Christ stands outside the door of the life, seeking entrance. (Revelation 3:20)



1. What adjective do you think best describes the man who does not understand the things of the Spirit of God? (I Corinthians 2:14)
2. What terms describe self in the following verses? (Romans 6:6, Galatians 5:16-17)
3. List at least three characteristics of the man without Christ, as described in Ephesians 2:1-3.
4. What is the condition of the heart of the natural man? (Jeremiah 17:9)
5. List the thirteen sins that Jesus said come from the heart of man. (Mark 7:20-23)
6. Summarize the relationship between God and the non-Christian. (John 3:36)
7. How, then, does one become a Christian? (John 1:12, Revelation 3:20)

The Spiritual or Christ-Controlled Christian

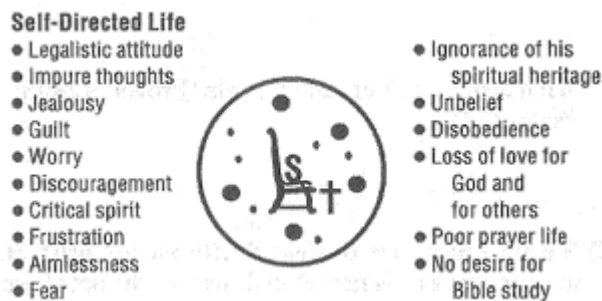
This circle represents the life of the person who has invited Jesus Christ to come into his life and who is allowing Him to control and empower his life. Christ is occupying His rightful place on the throne of the life. Self has been dethroned.



1. What are some other characteristics of a life controlled by God's Spirit? (Romans 6:6)
2. In what sense could the Spirit-controlled life be called the exchanged life? (Galatians 2:20)
3. Where does the Christian receive the power to live this otherwise impossible life? (Philippians 4:13)
4. What does the spiritual Christian have that will enable him to understand the things of God? (I Corinthians 2:14-16)

The Worldly Christian and the Solution

In I Corinthians 3:1-3 the Apostle Paul addresses the Christians as "worldly," rather than spiritual. The following diagram represents a life in which the person's ego has asserted itself. Self has usurped the throne of the life, and Christ has stepped down. The result is the loss of the individual's fellowship with God though he is still a Christian.



1.) Describe the worldly Christian as presented in I Corinthians 3:1-3.

- ⤴ Name five or six practices that result from worldliness. (Galatians 5:19-20)
- ⤴ Summarize in your own words the relationship between the worldly mind and God, as described in Romans 8:7.

2.) The solution to worldliness (the self-controlled life) is threefold. We must confess our sins, recognizing that we have been rulers of our own lives. When we confess them, what will God do? (I John 1:9)

- ⤴ Read Proverbs 28:13. What is the result of not admitting sin? Then read Proverbs 28:13 again, then read Psalm 32:1. What is the result of admitting your sin?
- ⤴ We must surrender, or yield, the throne to Christ. State in your own words how Paul describes the act of presenting ourselves to God. (Romans 12:1-2)
- ⤴ By faith we must recognize that Christ assumed control of our lives upon our invitation. How can you be sure that if you ask Jesus Christ to assume His rightful place on the throne of your life, He will do it? (I John 5:14-15)
- ⤴ We receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. How then do we allow Him to control our lives moment by moment? (Colossians 2:6)
- ⤴ Give three reasons faith is so important. (Hebrews 11:6, Romans 14:23, Romans 1:17)

Life Application

The secret of the abundant life is to allow Jesus Christ to control your life moment by moment through His Holy Spirit living within you. When you realize that you have sinned, confess your sin immediately; thank God for forgiving you and continue to walk in fellowship with God.

1.) In prayer, examine your attitude. Do you honestly want Christ to control your life? If not, ask God to change your heart. Thank Him, by faith, that He has begun to do so.

- ⤴ List areas of your life that you believe should be brought under the control of Jesus Christ.
- ⤴ Ask God to show you ways to bring these areas under His control.

2.) To make I John 1:9 meaningful in your life:

- ⤴ List your sins and failures below.
- ⤴ Claim I John 1:9 for your own life by writing the words of the verse over the list after you print out this study.
- ⤴ Thank God for His forgiving and cleansing.

- ✦ Destroy the list.
- ✦ Make restitution wherever appropriate and possible.

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