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HOLY SPIRIT: INTRANSITION GROUPZINE

THE CHRIST-CENTERED, SPIRIT FILLED LIFE

InTransition equips and prepares graduating seniors to transition to post-graduation life and make an impact for Christ in the world. Single life, finances, life-transitions, the will of God, a theology of work, evangelism in the real world: InTransition addresses all the critical issues of a successful transition from campus—a resource for the last and most neglected phase of campus discipleship.

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AND DON'T YOU FORGET IT. *The Christ-centered life: filled with the Spirit*

While we hope there are many things that you learned in your involvement with the ministry there are a couple things I hope you'll never forget.

Assurance

When you became a Christian, Christ indwelt you through the person of the Holy Spirit. I neither know the how or where but I do know that the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence carries with it the assurance of our salvation, "Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession..." (Ephesians 1:13,14). We are now God's possession and the Holy Spirit is, in effect, the down payment on His purchased property—that would be you. Like the idea expressed in marriage, receiving Christ is a one-time decision. We don't awake each morning to a fresh need to say, "I do"; once was enough. Having received Christ, the Scriptures state that we became children of God: "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the privilege to become children of God" (John 1:12). In theory I could tell my parents that I no longer wished to be in their family but I can never change the reality that I am their son. It's an established fact on the basis of my birth. I can sever our fellowship but not our relationship. And as there was not one thing we did to earn our salvation, there is nothing we can ever do to lose it—we are eternally Christ's.

But the Holy Spirit is more than simply an assurance of our salvation. It is through the Spirit that God enables and empowers us to live the Christian life.

So how exactly does the Holy Spirit exert control over our lives, and what is our role in the process? Perhaps the most helpful passage in Scripture for answering these questions is this one:

Be very careful ... how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:15-20, NIV)

One is compelled to ask, "What does getting drunk on wine have to do with being filled with the Spirit?" Well, obviously they are opposite alternatives, but they must share some base of similarity or why couple them together? The link between them, or the similarity they share, is in the idea of influence. They are both foreign entities that, when internalized, influence our behavior.

Walking in the Spirit

Alcohol provides a good example of a foreign influence (albeit a bad one) that can affect our will and behavior. As demonstrated by alcohol, control is always a question of degrees. There are things we can do that hinder the Spirit's influence and things we can do to

increase sensitivity to the Spirit's leading. This is at the heart of walking in step—or being filled—with the Spirit.

So, what exactly affects the Spirit's influence? What constitutes the Spirit-filled life? What leads to the Spirit having maximum influence over our lives?

Lordship. How does one become more drunk—or should I say drunker? One consumes more alcohol. In the case of the Holy Spirit, we have all of Him that we will ever have. So the major determinant of the Spirit's influence is how much of us we let Him consume, meaning how much of our lives we allow Him to control. The questions we must ask ourselves are these: "Do we desire to live for Christ in every area of our life (dating, vocation, relationships, and so on)?" We often call this a "lordship" decision, and if you have never made it, this would really be a good time to do so. In prayer, tell God that your life is His and that you desire to live for Christ alone.

(If you need help with the words, you might refer to the prayer and pledge of surrender found inside the back cover.)

This is a declaration to follow Christ wherever He leads, to whatever end. This commitment, like any commitment, initiates an ongoing process: over time you'll discover deeper roots of sin and uncover areas disconnected from His control. In submitting these areas to Christ, we continue in, and affirm, His lordship and our commitment to live under it.

Confession. Sin is choosing to live our own way in order to satisfy our needs, wants, and desires rather than living in accordance with God's way. Sin is a seizure of control. Confession involves admitting the coup took place, receiving God's forgiveness, and returning that area of our life back to its rightful owner—God. All three aspects comprise confession, but unfortunately, here's where the process usually breaks down.

When we sin, we instinctively feel the impulse that someone must pay a price. No one gets off easy. What we need to decide is who is going to pay.

Alternative number one is to berate and heap guilt upon ourselves. Someone must pay, and rightfully it should be us, so we punish ourselves. Alternative two is to blame: "You made me sin." And that "you" could be any person or any thing. Either way, someone needs to take the fall for our sin, and it ain't gonna be us. "Now that you mention it, I'm not really sure that was a sin." Recognize it? It's alternative three: justifying ourselves. And as the word implies, we decide to make a judgment over and against our conscience,



declaring that what we did was actually right, or at least not very wrong. Why go through the effort? Because someone must pay for that sin, unless we can successfully eliminate the offense, and that's what we're shooting for in this approach.

Well, we are all brilliant lawyers, but try as we may, the Judge, God, is not hearing any of it. It's true that when you feel the conviction of sin, someone must die. But that person already has—2,000 years ago. So your plea bargaining was really a waste of time. What is needed is confession: the acknowledgment of sin and the acknowledgment and personal application of Christ's death for that sin.

The Greek word for confession actually means, "to say the same thing along with." In other words, you are agreeing with God that you have sinned, agreeing that Christ's death on the cross has paid the penalty for that sin and agreeing to turn from that sin and back to Christ—continuing to walking with Him.

While confession should occur daily, there is no set quantity for daily confessions: it could be twice a day, or it could be twenty times a day. Whenever the Spirit reveals sin to you, you confess it, turning back to Christ and continuing in fellowship with Him.

Faith. Confession, like many areas of the Christian life, carries with it the need to exert faith. You may not feel forgiven after you've confessed your sin, but on the basis of God's Word you need to choose/reckon/believe that you have indeed been forgiven. There are many times in your relationship with Christ when you'll feel a lack of emotional affirmation. Faith is choosing to believe God's word and acting upon it in spite of, or even in opposition to, our feelings and circumstances.

Reliance. Have you ever watched a cigarette smoker? Every time they sense a need in their life, they light up. If they feel lonely, they light up. If they feel scared or nervous, they light up. If they need confidence, they light up. And while you might not smoke, you can find yourself doing the same thing with food, music, coffee, or many other things.

Throughout each day, we sense the need for empowerment. Whether we're eaters, coffee drinkers, or smokers, all of us have this reflex.

But while there is immediacy to our "crutches," they never truly meet the need. When I'm done eating, for example, I'm just as lonely.

A life fully empowered or maximally influenced by the Spirit is one in which we reflexively turn to Christ throughout the day, asking for comfort, empowerment, wisdom, and direction. Instead of turning to whatever it is we turn to, we connect with God: "Oh Lord, I'm nervous. Will You please strengthen me" or "Oh Lord, will You please give me wisdom?" All day long, like smoking a pack of Marlboros, we turn to the Lord. This is the idea of *reliance* and it is vital to experiencing the Spirit's influence.

Praise, Thanksgiving, and Worship. If you've ever been to a college party or bar, you'll get this concept rather easily. It's the idea of atmosphere: the room is dark, the music is pulsing, clothes and conversation are sexually suggestive, and alcohol sands down inhibitions. An atmosphere has been created that's conducive to sin. Though no one forces you to drink, lust, or gossip, they don't have to. Just bask in the music and the glow of the lava-lamp long enough, and you simply want to.

Going back to our Spirit-filled passage again, Ephesians 5:19-20, notice what it says: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The description Paul gives is of an environment conducive to the empowering influence of the Holy Spirit. As we worship, give thanks, praise God, and sing, our hearts become like that party, only in a very good way. An atmosphere is created that draws us to God and other believers, affects our thoughts, actions, and emotions, and provides an environment where the Lord can freely reign. Without that environment, the Spirit's influence is like a slow IV drip. With it, His influence becomes a rushing stream—a stream of God's direction, guidance, and empowerment, powerfully carrying us along.

Quiet Times. When it comes to a lifestyle of worship, people by personality tend to move in one of two directions. There are the engineers of the world who like to have a time rigidly planned in their schedule, where they can pray, sing, praise and graph out the Scripture. Then,

there are the artists and pottery majors of the world who do all things in a process, time with God happens in an ongoing way—to and from the kiln. To enjoy the fullest influence of the Spirit we need to be both artists and engineers. We need to schedule time each day for prayer and the Scripture and we need to keep that vital connection throughout the day.

Community. And last, it is in community with other Christians that we experience a dynamic of the Spirit-filled life we can never experience alone, because we encounter the indwelling Spirit through the lives of others. As Will Walker's article, *Cellular*, (elsewhere in this groupzine) goes into considerable depth on the topic, I shall refer you there with only this, hopefully sobering thought: your experience of Christ and walk with God will not rise above the waterline of your community. Life giving relationships with other believers, characterized by love and truth, are the primary means by which Christ produces growth and maturity in our lives.

Summary

The Spirit-filled life is about how much you are allowing, cultivating, or hindering the Spirit's influence. It was the vision of Dr. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, that everyone within the ministry would not only understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit but would also take the initiative to share the ministry with others. Dr. Bright feared people's attempts to live out the Christian life through their own effort and discipline—a frustrating life, to say the least. As you move on from campus, my desire is that you abide in Christ by walking in step with His Spirit, and I hope you will take the initiative to share the Spirit-filled life with others.

Rick James
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