



## NG Study Guide: 1 Th. 5:17-28 “Be Spiritual” [11.18.18]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

### The Study

#### Thesis:

I hear a lot of people describes themselves as spiritual as in, “I’m not into church or religion, but I’m spiritual...” That might mean almost anything or almost nothing. So, what does it mean to be spiritual like Jesus? What are some characteristics of the Christian life? Today, we will discover how to be spiritual like Jesus...

*Pray without ceasing,<sup>18</sup> in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.<sup>19</sup> Do not quench the Spirit.<sup>20</sup> Do not despise prophecies.<sup>21</sup> Test all things; hold fast what is good.<sup>22</sup> Abstain from every form of evil.<sup>23</sup> Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>24</sup> He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.<sup>25</sup> Brethren, pray for us.<sup>26</sup> Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.<sup>27</sup> I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.<sup>28</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

#### 1. Be prayerful [v.17]

*Pray without ceasing* implies a lifestyle characterized by intimate communication with God. Jesus woke early in the morning to pray, and prayed all night in solitude before calling his apostles [Mk. 1:35, Lu. 6:12]. J.I. Packer, “If you are a Christian, you pray; and the recognition of God’s sovereignty is the basis of your prayers.” Paul requested prayer for himself and those who were with him [25]. Through prayer we acknowledge our dependence upon God. Through prayer, we commune with Him, make our requests known and intercede for others too.

#### 2. Be grateful [v.18]

*In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

We are called to give thanks for everything. There are times in life where you encounter circumstances that don’t appear to be blessings, but later you discover they were blessings in disguise. It is *God’s will in Christ* because gratitude reflects our confidence in the goodness and sovereignty of God. Gratitude flows from trusting Jesus. Jesus expressed gratitude to God the Father for always hearing His prayers, and thus modeled the attitude of gratitude [Jn.11:41]. Jesus stressed the importance of gratitude when He taught a parable of ten lepers who were miraculously healed, but only one returned to give thanks [Lu. 17:11-19]. When someone’s life has been saved, how long should they be grateful for? How grateful should we be for not only physical life, but abundant eternal life?

#### 3. Be Spirit-filled [19-20]

*Do not quench the Spirit.<sup>20</sup> Do not despise prophecies.*

Don’t quench the Spirit relates to not hindering the Spirit’s work, or don’t put out the Spirit’s fire. The Greek could be translated, stop quenching. At Ephesus, Paul told the church, “Don’t *grieve* the Holy Spirit” [Eph. 4:30]. I distinguish quenching and grieving as follows: when I *sense* the Spirit leading me to do something or not do

something, and I ignore the Spirit I *quench* the Spirit. When I *know* that I'm supposed to do or not do and I rebel, I *grieve* the Spirit. Grieving and quenching are negative ideas. As a positive, we are to be *filled* with the Holy Spirit meaning we are to be controlled by the Spirit [Eph. 5:18]. It is not a matter of you having more of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit having more of you. The Christian life is a spiritual life, not simply an emotional or intellectual experience. Some of the ways that we can quench the Spirit, that Paul has revealed in this letter, include: immorality [4:3-8, 5:22], spiritual apathy or laziness [4:11], not praying [5:19], division [5:26], and *despising prophecies* [20].

Jesus always does the Father's will, and thus never quenches the Spirit [Jn. 8:29].

We should not despise spiritual gifts generally, nor prophecy specifically [20]. The church at Thessalonica had developed contempt for prophecies, presumably because some had predicted Christ's return at a certain date, and people were more than disappointed when these predictions turned out to be false prophecies. However, we should be cautious that a false encounter with the Holy Spirit doesn't cause the pendulum to swing to the extreme that we neglect the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life, and in Christ's church in general. The purpose of prophecy is to foretell events or reveal God's encouragement to strengthen His people [1Cor. 14:3]. There are at least eighteen (18) gifts of the Holy Spirit that are listed in the New Testament [Rom. 12, 1Cor. 12, Eph. 4, 1 Pet. 4]. We believe that all of the gifts of the Spirit are available to the church today, and should be exercised with decency and order [1Cor. 14:12,26,40]. We want to be balanced so that the Holy Spirit's work in the Church is not neglected, nor do we want to emphasize the ministry of the Spirit such that we ignore the word of God and the ministry of Father and Son.

#### **4. Be discerning [21]**

*Test all things; hold fast what is good.*

The expression *test all things* was used in reference to testing metals to see if they were genuine or counterfeit. We should be discerning to determine if an experience is inspired by God's Spirit, simply human emotion, or is demonic in its inception. Not all who claim to speak prophecy really speak for God [Mt. 7:15-20, 1 Jn.4:1], and there are false teachers even in a spiritual setting (e.g. cults, false religions, liberalists who reject the Bible's authority).

Jesus demonstrates discernment regarding the true intentions of the religious leaders, and the spiritual origin of opposition to His ministry [Mt. 9:4, Mk. 8:33].

We are to hold fast to what is good. In essence, after testing cling to the genuine. The best way to be discerning, is to know the Bible and be filled with the Spirit. Paul expected that the church would learn the contents of this epistle and apply it to their lives [27]. Consider whether the teaching or philosophy aligns with the Bible; and is there some sense from the Spirit that there is something that is not right about the doctrine or situation?

#### **5. Be set-apart to God [22-25]**

<sup>22</sup> *Abstain from every form of evil.* <sup>23</sup> *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* <sup>24</sup> *He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.*

We are to keep away from evil or things opposed to God [22]. This verse tends to be abused by legalists to suggest that Christians cannot engage in a host of behaviors such as smoking, R-rated movies, going into a bar, dancing, going to concerts (unless a worship artist), etc. The principle is: be careful to live as people set-apart to God. We deceive ourselves if we ignore the influence of corrupting things and people in our lives [1 Cor. 15:33]. God has set you apart to Himself, and delights to sanctify you completely [23]. The work that God has begun, he will be faithful to complete it in Christ [24, Phil. 1:6].

When you receive Christ, you are once and for all set-apart to God. This is positional sanctification, however in practice from the time you are saved, until you are reunited with Christ, you are to keep growing in Christ [Heb. 10:10, 2Pet. 3:18]. We are to live as people set-apart to God!

#### **Study Guide Qs**

**1. How have you grown as a person of prayer in the last year? What tips would you give others about prayer?**

**2. What are some things that you are grateful for that may not have initially seemed like blessings? How can we cultivate an attitude of gratitude?**

**3. Discuss the spiritual gifts that you believe that God has given you, and gifts you see in others in your NG.**

**4. How would you like to apply this lesson in your life?**

**“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)**

**1. Spiritual gifts: there are at least eighteen (18) gifts of the Holy Spirit that are listed in the New Testament [Rom. 12, 1Cor.12, Eph. 4, 1 Pet. 4]. These lists are not intended to be complete. For example, you won’t see the gift of leading worship listed. Pray, and review the lists and consider what gifts God may have given to you and others you know?**

**2. If you haven’t already, subscribe to the prayer request list at [prayer@calvarynexus.org](mailto:prayer@calvarynexus.org). Pray through the requests as God leads. What did you discover about prayer, God, and yourself?**

**Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:**

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

**Let your neighbor(s) know why you are grateful to God for them, and let them know that you are praying for them.**

**Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:**

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

**Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don’t force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

**Leader Notes:**

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn’t enough time to answer them all.

**3. The “Digging Deeper” section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the “Digging Deeper” section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

**4. Every time you meet consider asking:**

**a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.