

Real Life: Living from the Inside Out

Spirit, soul, and body, and why God wants your spirit leading the way

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. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23-24

AT A GLANCE

BIG IDEA	God made us spirit, soul, and body, and He wants to make all of us holy. Real life happens when the Holy Spirit strengthens our spirit, so it leads our soul and body, instead of our body's cravings running the show.
SCRIPTURE	1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 · Ephesians 3:16-19 · Romans 8:10-13 · 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 · 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 · John 10:10
LENGTH	About 25 minutes
BEST FOR	High school
YOU WILL NEED	Bibles and a whiteboard with three nested circles labeled (inside to outside) Spirit, Soul, Body

Start here: who's driving?

Imagine a car where the passengers in the back seat keep grabbing the steering wheel. It might go somewhere, but probably not where it should. Many people live like that. Their cravings, moods, and impulses grab the wheel, and their life swerves all over the road.

Paul prays that God would "sanctify you completely," spirit, soul, and body. To sanctify means to set apart for God, to make holy. God wants all of you. And He has a design for who should be "driving."

1 Three parts of you

PART	WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT INCLUDES
Spirit	The part of you that senses the spiritual realm and can know God	Conscience, intuition (spiritual perception), and communion with God
Soul	The inner person: your personality, the real you	Mind (thoughts), will (choices), and emotions (feelings)
Body	The part of you that senses the physical world and other people	Your physical brain, heart, and stomach (gut), with their appetites

Draw the three circles on the board, with the spirit at the center. Here's the key idea: **your physical body grows from the outside in, but your spiritual life grows from the inside out.** God wants your spirit, made alive and strengthened by His Spirit, to lead your soul and body, not the other way around. When the spirit leads, it brings healing and life. When the body's cravings lead, they bring destruction and death (Romans 8:13).

BACKGROUND FOR THE LEADER

This talk pairs well with "The Human Spirit: Conscience, Intuition, and Communion." Christians differ on whether people are best described in two parts or three, but Scripture clearly speaks of an inner spiritual life and calls us to let the Spirit, not our appetites, lead (Galatians 5:16).

2 Step one: accept the need to live from the core

The first step is simply agreeing with God's design: my spirit, led by the Holy Spirit, should direct my mind, choices, feelings, and body. Look at how the Bible describes people living from their spirit: Jesus "perceived in His spirit" (Mark 2:8); He "groaned in the spirit" (John 11:33); Paul went to Jerusalem "bound in the spirit" (Acts 20:22); true worshipers worship "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23). And Paul says, "the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Spiritual life needs spiritual eyes.

3 Step two: be strengthened by the Holy Spirit

"That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man." **EPHESIANS 3:16**

We can't make our spirit strong by willpower. Ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen you on the inside, and then act on that strength. Paul also prayed that God would give believers "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Ephesians 1:17). Prayer, God's Word, worship, and obedience are how the inner person grows.

4 Step three: apply that strength to your body

- **The Spirit brings life.** "If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:13).

- **Glorify God in your body.** "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit... therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
- **Control your body in purity.** "Each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor" (1 Thessalonians 4:4).
- **Jesus gives real life.** "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Paul urges, "lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:12), and reminds us that God "gives us richly all things to enjoy" (6:17).

A CAREFUL WORD ABOUT SICKNESS

Paul warned the Corinthians that their careless, sinful treatment of the Lord's Supper had led some to become weak and sick (1 Corinthians 11:27-32). Sin can affect our bodies. But the Bible is also clear that sickness is **not always** caused by a person's sin (John 9:1-3). Never tell someone their illness is their fault. Encourage good medical care along with prayer.

The promise

This isn't a self-improvement project. Look at the end of our key verse: "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it." God started this work in you, and He will finish it.

TALK IT OVER

1. Using the car picture, what happens when our cravings or moods are "driving"?
2. In your own words, what is the difference between your spirit, soul, and body?
3. What does it mean that spiritual life grows "from the inside out"?
4. What are practical ways to be strengthened in your inner person?
5. Which area of your body (eyes, mouth, appetites, habits) most needs to come under the Spirit's leadership right now?

TAKE IT HOME

Pray Ephesians 3:16 every morning this week: "Holy Spirit, strengthen me in my inner person today." Then choose one specific way to honor God with your body this week, such as sleep, purity, what you watch, or how you eat, and ask a friend to check on you.

Let the Spirit lead, and real life follows.

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