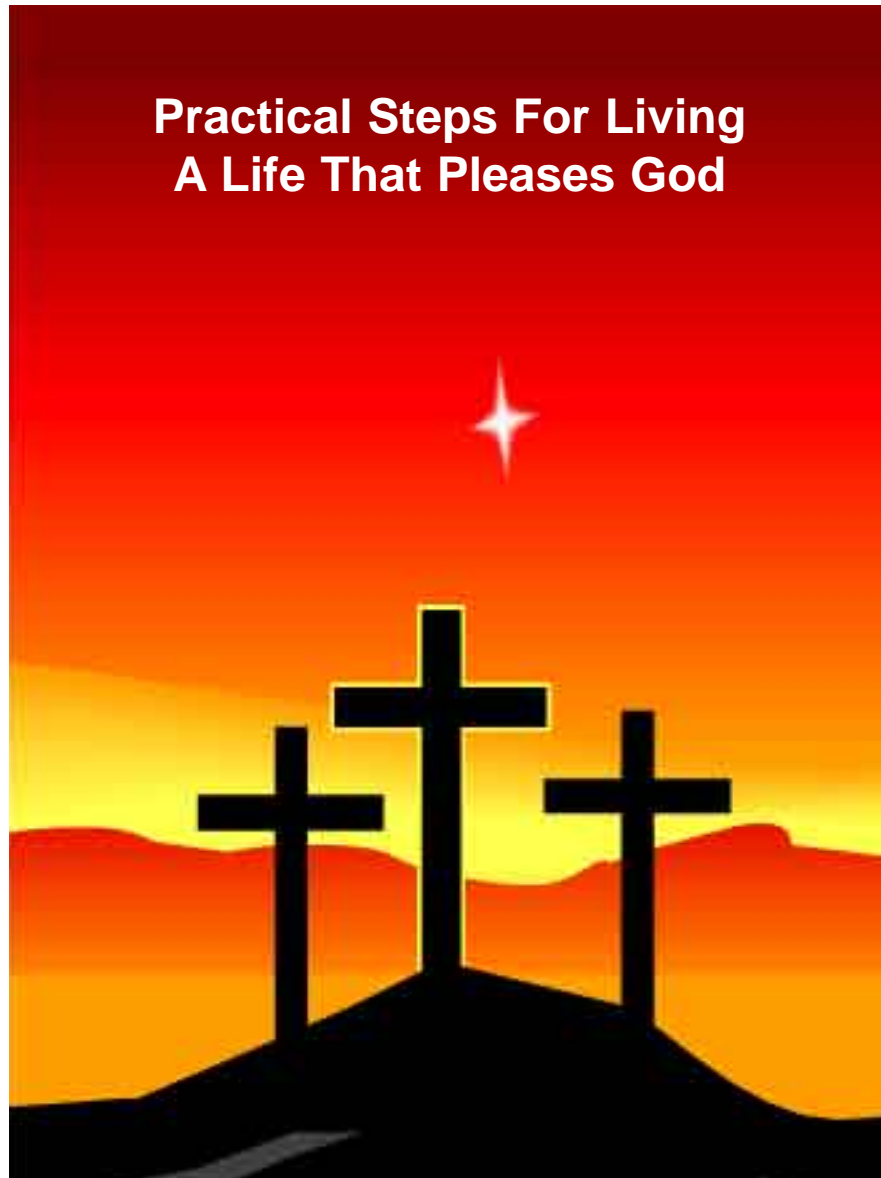


Lifebytes:

3. Take the Pedals Off



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Dear Friends,

This is a lengthy note from our hearts that's geared especially toward men, but also for wives who are frustrated by a void in their marriage relationship. Please take time to ponder this, as it will transform your relationship with the Holy Spirit as well!

Sue and I have mountain bikes and enjoy biking on the trails that thread themselves throughout Colorado Springs. When you work in front of a computer as many hours each day as we do, it's exhilarating to climb on our bikes for a 15-mile ride. We often say we feel like dogs just let out of the kennel.

Last weekend we met a family with three boys at a rest stop on the trail. As we talked about family and 'bike-talk' with them, the husband said something that Sue and I immediately knew had spiritual implications. We want to share this with you in this e-mail. We were discussing training our children how to ride a bike.

As I write, I remember when our own son learned to ride at the age of 4. Sue had been taking Mike out each day and holding him as he learned how to balance. One Saturday morning I was working on our van in the driveway and Mike came out and asked if I'd help him ride his bike. I told him to get his helmet and bike and come out to the end of the driveway. We lived near the end of a dead end road, and I said, "Go ahead." He grinned and set off peddling down the road.

Sue came out at that moment and asked where our son was. When I told her he was peddling down the street, she exclaimed with a mother's concern, "But he doesn't know how to ride alone!" I pointed at him racing back toward us, "Tell him!"

Back to the bike trail 26 years later: The father of the 3 boys told us about a new technique to train children how to ride a bike: **Take the pedals off**. Do you see, to ride a bike is an experiential matter. As the child pushes himself along with his feet on the ground, his inner balance mechanism is being trained. With each push with his feet, his balance mechanism gains experience. The child begins ever-longer rides with his feet off the ground. Using this technique, a child usually learns how to ride in one day.

IMMEDIATELY Sue and I knew that what he'd said made sense. The whole issue of riding a bike is to train your balance mechanism to impart proper adjustments to keep you upright. Training wheels only hinder the learning process. They may give immediate comfort, but they prolong the time it takes for the child to reach the desired goal — **To RIDE THE BIKE!**

In seconds after the man explained this new technique, the Holy Spirit spoke to my spirit: "This man is talking to you both about Me! Use this to help others rely on Me. So many quench and grieve Me, and never experience the life I would give them!"

Twenty-eight years ago after Sue and I became followers of Jesus, we were disciplined first into how to live in cooperation with the Holy Spirit Who had now taken up His dwelling in us. We had read the Bible and the writings of Billy Graham and Derek Prince on the Holy Spirit. We could see in the Bible the clear command, "*Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit*" (Galatians 5:25).

Ponder this biblical fact before we go further. We who follow Jesus are commanded, "***Be filled with the Spirit***" (Ephesians 5:18). We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit the moment our Father consummates His Covenant with us. As we've written in our article, "***The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation***", the sealing of the Holy Spirit guarantees His part of the Covenant. And yet, the 'filling of the Holy Spirit' occurs over time as our soul, that is, our mind, will, and emotions, become submitted to His will. We learn to increasingly live 'in step with the Spirit.'

This 'filling' is an experiential process that takes place over time as our obedient trust continues and grows. For many the growth process begins with the demolishing of strongholds that have control and influence in their souls.

Twenty-eight years ago Sue and I first tried to access the Holy Spirit through our minds, but that failed. We felt that having read about Him, we knew Him. We can assure you, reading about the Holy Spirit isn't the same as knowing Him. For too many, reading about Him without knowing and walking in Him is a trap. That's as far as they go! It would be like Sue and I reading about each other, but never meeting. Wouldn't it be ludicrous for us to say, "We *know* each other"? Only as a result of years of experiencing each other and giving up our own individual wills have we been able to experience each other in the union God desires. Sue and I are now so much a part of each other. She occupies so much of the heart of who I am.

Another anecdote helps convey the issue of learning to live in union with the Holy Spirit.

In 1974 we'd been married 4 years. Much of that time I'd been away, with 3 deployments to Vietnam. When I finally returned, we got shore duty at Naval Air Station, Point Mugu, California. We moved into base housing and got actively involved in the base chapel. Still, something was missing in our marriage.

One Sunday afternoon a Chief with whom I served and attended chapel came to our home with his wife. They wanted to encourage us to attend a Marriage Encounter. None of his reasons for going rang a bell for me until he said, "Lieutenant Dowgiewicz, a lot of us enlisted couples have gone and our marriages are not the same. Not one officer couple has been willing to go. We see them suffering in isolation in their marriages like we once were. We came to you because we've seen your desire to serve others, but as a couple, you're missing what we once lacked — ***we didn't know how to express our feelings to each other.***" RING!!! Bells rang in my heart. He was right on!

We went to a weekend Marriage Encounter retreat at the Mission in Santa Barbara. Couples who had gone through the program before and practiced in their marriages what they'd learned conducted the retreat. I liked that. They knew what we all were going to have to go through to become people who could express feelings to each other. Thirty years later I still remember a critical definition they gave us: "***If you think you are expressing a feeling to the other person and you can substitute the words "I think" for the words "I feel" in what you're sharing, then you're only expressing an opinion, not your feelings.***"

As the weekend progressed, during each break I'd find myself in the men's room talking with the other guys. As we stood there shoulder-to-shoulder we'd ask each other, "Do you get it yet?" Initially, we were all dumb-founded. It seemed like those teaching us were speaking a foreign language. Then Saturday afternoon a few of my compatriots began to reply, "I got it!" It made the rest of us a little nervous. Pressure started building with each break as a few more declared, "I got it!" I finally "got it" during the last break Saturday night. As Sue and I went to sleep that night I found an emotional heart attachment to her I'd never experienced before. My feelings for her had *life* — a deep expression of who she was to me!

The next morning we were asked to do a '90-90' — 90 minutes to write a love letter to our spouse, then 90 minutes as we read each other's letter and privately discussed it. The first 90 minutes flew by because Sue and I had so much to express to each other. The second 90 was the 'honeymoon' we'd never experienced. That night on the 50-mile trip from Santa Barbara back to Point Mugu, we drove alongside the Pacific Ocean as the sun was setting over the sea. Everything, sky and water, turned cray-on red. We knew it was our Lord's sign of blessing us.

Our neighbors on base were a couple with whom we led the youth group at the chapel. Two months later they went to a Marriage Encounter. Then another couple, and another... In six months over 30 officer couples went. Each month there was a 'Command Function' at the Officer's Club. The couples who had attended an Encounter were attract-

ed to each other. We related to each other in such a deep and wonderful way. Others saw how different and deeply affectionate we were with one another. By the time the next function would come, others had gone to an Encounter and joined us in wonderful conversations from the heart.

If you think you're expressing a relationship with the Holy Spirit and you can substitute the words "*I read about...*" for the words "*I saw Him at work*" in what you're sharing, then your words indicate that you don't really *know* Him.

When I entered flight training a wise mentor told me, "Mike, the essence of flying is *flying*. Ground school helps, but it's what you do in the cockpit that makes you a great pilot." We want to emphasize, "The essence of keeping in step with the Holy Spirit is KEEPING IN STEP WITH HIM." You're either walking along with Him or you're not.

If you truly know the Holy Spirit, everything you share about Him will be a testimony of your experience with Him, just as the apostle Paul's testimony shows. When I speak about Sue to someone else, my conversations are based on my experience with her. It isn't a smorgasbord of facts, but my heart expression based on my intimate relationship with her. [Now there's a caveat here: I don't share with a lot of men my deep emotions about Sue and my heart's relationship with my Father and His Son, Jesus. I can only do that with men who can appreciate my heart's devotion because they live with the same relational dedication. There are too many men who trample their wives' hearts. And God is little more than Bible knowledge for them. It isn't worth casting the

'pearls of my personal experience' with men who immediately return to some fact-based conversation. I feel muddled for sharing my heart with them.]

It's the same for those who live by the Holy Spirit. Paul describes the tension for those of us who have the Spirit and walk by the Spirit: *"The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*

We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:10-14).

Those without the Spirit can NEVER understand those who live by the Spirit. And, those who live by the Spirit can NEVER explain what it's like to live by the Spirit to those who don't have the Spirit. It gets messy if you try. Believe us, we know!

We want to affirm: EVERYTHING that our Father will ever accomplish in and through any of His children can only be accomplished through your reliance on and interaction with the indwelling Holy Spirit. The man who knows *about* Him without *knowing* Him knows nothing. The man who truly knows the Spirit can talk about Him

through personal experience, and from that personal experience can glorify the Father through his testimony.

Consider these biblical truths:

- NO ONE can truly pray without the Holy Spirit.
- NO ONE can have the wisdom needed to live a life pleasing to our Father without living in step with the Holy Spirit.
- NO ONE can love God or others in a manner that's acceptable to Him without the heart-changing fruit that only the Holy Spirit provides.
- NO ONE lives empowered to fulfill the purposes God has ordained for them without total reliance on the Holy Spirit.
- NO ONE can experience the inner comfort the soul often needs in this evil world without the heart-healing power of the Holy Spirit.

The most common hindrances we have seen that keep people from experiencing the fullness of relationship with the Holy Spirit are **bitterness, pride, and rebellion**. Consider if these are hindering you if you are one of those still trapped in your intellect alone. If you always have to analyze or know "the bottom line", then you're indicating you don't know or rely on or trust in the Holy Spirit. NO ONE can understand the work of the Holy Spirit as He carries out our Father's purposes. As Jesus attests, *"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit"* (John 3:8). He calls for you to yield in trust and to obey, but you can never fully understand His ways.

It is like the old story of wrestling with the concept of the Trinity. As a man

walked along the beach one day he met Jesus disguised as a little boy. The boy had dug a hole in the sand near the water and was using a bucket to pour water from the sea into the hole he had dug. The man asked, "What are you doing, little boy?" He replied, "I'm trying to empty the ocean into this hole." The man responded with a laugh, "That's impossible!" The boy answered, "No more than you trying to understand the Trinity!"

We'd like to share two of our favorite passages of Scripture concerning the Holy Spirit. We hope they encourage you to press on in Jesus as much as they do us: ***"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit"*** (Romans 15:13); and, ***"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men"*** (Romans 14:17,18).

We want to conclude with this focus for you: Keeping in step with the Spirit is totally experiential as you walk with Him in obedient trust. The Bible shows us the myriad of functions our Father and Jesus have ordained for the Spirit to accomplish in the followers of Jesus. But each child must have a heart's desire for Him to do those things ***in*** and ***through*** them that ultimately glorify our Father.

If you want to know the Holy Spirit and experience all He can do to change you and to enable you to live in step with Him, you have to first ***humble yourself***. It's only as you're on your knees asking from your heart for the help that ONLY He can give that He will provide it. And we've NEVER seen Him take more than 24 hours to do His thing in response to His child's humble heart cry!

Our love in Him Who loves,
Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz