

## Engage the Spirit's Leading

ROMANS 8:1-14

Sometimes I fly on an airline where there's no assigned seating. And, here's what happens.

If you're in the last group to board, all of the window seats are taken, and just as likely, all of the aisle seats are taken. Meaning? All of the middle seats are open!

So walking down the aisle usually means that all of those already seated *really don't want you* to take the middle seat next to them. I mean, we like our space! Those seated refuse to look up at you as you search. Looking up prematurely indicates a willingness to stand and let you in. No, they keep their heads down, non-verbally shouting, "Keep moving you last-group loser...leave free space free!"

On the plane I was boarding, one man in the very front row was a bit less subtle. He had actually lifted up the arm rest between the aisle seat and the middle seat, and was literally sitting in both seats, with his wife on the window – and was looking at those boarding with a face that said, "Don't even think about it." He didn't want to sit next to his wife, but he also didn't want anyone coming on the plane to take the middle seat nor the aisle seat. It was kinda funny.

Not long ago I took a flight, and I decided that even though I was one of the last to board, I was NOT going to walk to the back of the plane. So, at Row 4 there was a middle seat between two men (neither of whom would look at me)...but I spoke to the young businessman in the aisle seat (who was reading a book) and asked "Has that seat been taken?"

He said "No," and politely stood up to let me and my backpack in. I said "Thanks" and settled in, and he resumed reading his book.

As we lifted off, my friend on the left never had to shut off his phone or "anything with an on-off switch." He just kept reading his hardcover book, which appeared to me (as I kept glancing sideways to see) to be a Bible. A few more (discreet) glances confirmed that it was not only a Bible, but he was reading (in all places) in the Old Testament, and specifically the books of *2 Chronicles* and *Obadiah*. He was reading "eagerly," flipping pages back and forth, taking out a pen and making notes in the margins. He was really after it.

OK...so he had my attention. I could only wait a couple more minutes. "So," I said, "tell me what you find so interesting in the books of 2 Chronicles and Obadiah?"

He smiled warmly, "I just love the Bible," he said. "I've read the New Testament several times, and this is my second time through the Old Testament. There is so much wisdom in here, so many examples to learn from. It's *really* interesting."

"Are you in ministry or something?" I continued.

"No. I work for a small technology engineering firm in San Diego, about 25 people. I grew up in Iowa, was baptized and raised in the Lutheran church, went to school in Brookings, SD. I just really love learning from the Word."

Indeed, he did! We didn't talk much more during the 2½ hour flight. But here's a "tech guy" who didn't have a pad with movies or MP3 player with tunes. He just kept reading, thinking, listening to God, and taking notes. When he tired, he close the book and dose off. But when he woke, the Bible returned to the open position. **I sat there thinking, "This isn't normal." Or is it?**

In *A Praying Life*, Paul Miller relates how he and Jill, his wife, manage

a part-time, seasonal tax business. Several years ago [Paul] arrived at the office at eight in the morning ...noticed that his "computer's hard drive was almost full," so he tried to delete an old program. Yet without thinking, he clicked "yes" to "Delete all shared files?" and got the blue screen of death. The computer was dead.

Customers were going to start arriving later in the morning, ...Hours later, "the problem still wasn't fixed when our 11:30 AM customer walked in. "I asked our preparer to tell her that we'd be ready 'any minute now.'"

He had to race home to get a disk, slinking by the “**eleven thirty**,” avoiding eye contact. It was close to **noon** when I slipped by her again to get a backup computer. I stole a glance at her and noticed that she was sitting quietly, without a hint of impatience. When I came back **at one**, she was still waiting serenely.

Her calm demeanor was unchanged when we finally did her tax return **at three o'clock**. Depressed and frustrated, I blurted out, “Does Jesus make a difference in your life?”

She replied, “Jesus is everything to me. I talk to him all the time.”

**I was floored, partly by the freshness and simplicity of her faith but mainly by the unusual patience that displayed her faith.**

Now I was overwhelmed by the irony of my unbelief. Jesus had been sitting in our waiting room, right in front of me, as obvious as the daylight. I had walked by him all day.<sup>1</sup>

My own experience on the plane. Paul Miller’s experience with an extraordinarily patient woman. **Again, I wondered, “That’s not normal.” Or is it?**

What is “normal” in your walk with God...“if the Spirit of God is flowing out of your heart” because you believe in and belong to Jesus Christ?

**With the HOLY SPIRIT flowing  
out of my heart,  
it is normal for daily living  
to thoroughly delight my Father!**  
*Romans 8:1-14*

Let’s read Romans 8

*Romans 8* There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (who walk not in step with the flesh but in step with the Spirit).<sup>2</sup> For the law of the **Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus** from the law of sin and death.<sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,<sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

<sup>5</sup> For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit **set their minds on the things of the Spirit**.<sup>6</sup> For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.<sup>7</sup> For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.<sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh **cannot please God**.

<sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.<sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.<sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.<sup>14</sup> For **all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God**.

Let’s get to know this chapter well. **What’s normal?** Here’s what this chapter teaches...

**1<sup>st</sup> – It’s normal (by the Spirit)  
be set free to live righteously (8:1-4)**

*Romans 8* There is **therefore** now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (who walk not in step with the flesh but in step with the Spirit).<sup>2</sup> For the law of **the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus** from the law of sin and death.

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In this great letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul uses the word THEREFORE at least 17 times. Each time, “therefore” signals an important, life-defining outcome. For example,

*Rom 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we **have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Rom 6:4 We were buried **therefore** with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might **walk in newness of life**.*

*Rom 8:1 **Therefore**, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not in step with the flesh but rather **in step with the Spirit**.*

By FAITH in Christ we have PEACE with God  
By being RAISED with Christ we have a NEW LIFE with God  
By the SPIRIT, our living in Christ is WITHOUT CONDEMNATION

Why? In these verses, Paul is reminding these early Roman Christians – and us – that so often, on our own, we fail in righteousness. Our sinning and the death it brings to what could be good in our lives regularly brings frustration, even a sense of personal failure/condemnation.

God did two things. First, he sent His own Son to crucify our sin problem (vs.3). And second (vs.4) He set us free to “walk” or live “according to the Spirit. Verse 4 could read like this:

*Now we are enabled to express God’s righteousness  
Living according to (or in step with) the Holy Spirit.*

In other words, no Christian’s life (e.g., thinking, mind, heart, emotions, choices) need be clouded with a sense of failure or frustration. No one need be crippled by condemnation. Jesus said that **every** believer could have the Holy Spirit flowing out of his/her heart as *a way of life*.

Has his dawned on you yet?<sup>ii</sup> Living freely, righteously, is what’s normal. Anything less is not.

Those who know the Northwest portion of our country likely know something about the Grand Coulee Dam. It’s a concrete gravity dam on the great Columbia River, built originally between 1933 and 1942, with a third power station added in 1974. It’s the largest power station by nameplate capacity in the United States,<sup>iii</sup> and should you want to see this marvel, there is a Visitor Center on Hwy 155 just several thousand feet away.

One day, Paul Dawson and his family came to visit the dam, arriving at the Visitor Center. They parked the car, walked up to the front door, and found the center shrouded in complete darkness. It was a sunny day, and at first, they thought perhaps they were looking through tinted windows. A closer look proved there were simply no lights on. The door was

open, so they walked in. None of the displays were working...and the conclusion was obvious. There was no power to the Center. A “technical difficulty” of some kind. Hundreds of feet from one of the greatest hydro-electric dam ever, and...

Dawson thought, “How could something be so close to the power source, yet not be *plugged in*?”

**2<sup>nd</sup> It's normal (by the Spirit)  
to be full of life and peace (8:5-8)**

*<sup>5</sup> For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit **set their minds on the things of the Spirit.** <sup>6</sup> For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but **to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.** <sup>7</sup> For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

Please note the contrast between 2 ways of living. These two ways, though opposite, are a result of the same key action.

One way: *to live according to the flesh.* The opposite way of living: *to live according to the Spirit.* So arises the 1<sup>st</sup> obvious question. How would you describe your *way of living*?

You reply, “I don’t know. I mean, how can I tell whether I’m living *according to the Spirit* or *according to the flesh*? Well, it’s all determined by the key action. *Where do you SET YOUR MIND?*”

This critical choice is mentioned here 5 times. φρονιμα means “to purposely think, a mentality.”<sup>iv</sup>

- My grandson for a time had his mind set on LEGOS
- I know of people who set their minds on playing video games, golf, money, food, sex, their next trip or vacation...something.
- A young man’s first GIRLFRIEND, a young woman’s first BOYFRIEND...

“To set the mind” is *to choose to think about something over and over and over* again. To make it the “elephant in the room” of your head/heart. In most cases, there is always a CHOICE involved.

Paul’s point – *It’s normal<sup>v</sup> for a Christian to – as a habit of life – set your mind, to renew your mind on, the things of God’s Spirit every day.* The result? *True life and stabilizing peace.* In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis put it simply

*A car is made to run on petro (gasoline), and it will not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion/faith. God cannot give us a happiness or a peace apart from Himself because it is not there. There is no such thing.*

Isaiah 26:3 You keep him in perfect peace whose mind  
is stayed on you, because he trusts in you

To the delight of my/your Father, it’s normal BY THE SPIRIT

- To be set free to live righteously
- To be full of life and peace

### **3<sup>rd</sup> It's normal (by the Spirit) to be led to crucify sin practices (8:9-14)**

Start in vs. 12

<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For **all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.**

In *First Things First*, A. Roger Merrill tells of a business consultant who decided to landscape his grounds. He hired a woman with a doctorate in horticulture who was extremely knowledgeable.

Because the business consultant was very busy and traveled a lot, he kept emphasizing to her the need to create his garden in a way that would require little or no maintenance on his part. He insisted on automatic sprinklers and other labor-saving devices.

Finally she stopped and said, "There's one thing you need to deal with before we go any further. **If there's no gardener, there's no garden!**"<sup>vi</sup>

Verse 13 is talking about the “gardening” of the Holy Spirit in my life. There will be times, even as God’s child, that I will use my body in sinful ways. So what’s normal – to “put to death” those things, so that the beauty of God’s life flowers out even more. What “misdeeds” is God’s Spirit in you indicating He wants to prune off?

So what happens? What happens when the Holy Spirit and I keep in step together? What happens when I set my mind on the things of the Spirit? What happens when I cooperate with the Holy Spirit in crucifying those misdeeds? I mean, what in the world will I look like then?

Paul: “You will live! Christ will live in you! <sup>8:10</sup> *But if Christ is in you... the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* Perhaps Corrie Ten Boom pictured it best.

I have a glove here in my hand. The glove cannot do anything by itself, but when my hand is in it, it can do many things. True, it is not the glove, but my hand in the glove that acts. We are gloves. It is the Holy Spirit in us who is the hand, who does the job. We have to make room for the hand so that every finger is filled.<sup>vii</sup>

#### **When the Spirit flows, it's normal**

- To live righteously w/o condemnation
- A mind preoccupied with life/peace
- Have the Spirit lead: “This goes!”

*Romans 8:1-14*

#### **FINISH**

Some years ago, a simple, illiterate man who brought to faith through the Salvation Army. He went regularly to the Salvation Army worship center. One day he came home rather disconsolate.

His wife said, "What's the matter?" He said, "I've just noticed that all the people in the Salvation Army wear red sweaters, and I don't have a red sweater." She said, "I'll knit one." So she knitted him a red sweater.

The next Sunday after he went to the citadel, he still wasn't happy.

His wife said, "What's wrong this time?"

He said, "I just noticed all their red sweaters have yellow writing."

They were both illiterate, but she said, "Don't worry about it. I'll embroider some writing on for you." She had no idea what the yellow writing on the red sweater of a Salvation Army man said.

The man's wife had no idea what the letters said, and she couldn't read anyway. So copying a sign from a store window opposite their home, she embroidered the words of that store sign onto his red sweater.

When he came back the next Sunday, she said, "Did they like your sweater?"

"They loved my sweater. Some of them said they liked my sweater better than their sweater."

What neither of them knew was that the sign on the store window she had copied read, UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT.

That's what it means to get saved. That's what it means to get converted. That's what it means for the Holy Ghost to come upon you: this business under new management. <sup>viii</sup>

You know, every once in a while, you can get on a crowded plane and sit next to someone who is "under new management." You can discover someone sitting in your reception area who is "under new management." People who have discovered that their daily living can be full of life and peace and Jesus. People who don't put up with any sin that crops into their lives. They simply, and thoroughly delightful to the heart of their Father...because **they are running on the fuel of the Holy Spirit.** Here's what I'd ask...

**Take the time to think about and better understand this**

this is insight and revelation from God deserving not a "sip," but a full and long drink

**Pray for this** – tell the Lord on a regular basis that you are increasingly willing to depend upon & cooperate with the Holy Spirit

**Ask the Spirit** – to lead in identify the things that need to go in order to grow as a "son"

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<sup>i</sup> Paul E. Miller, *A Praying Life: Connecting With God In A Distracting World* (Kindle Locations 1320-1323). NAVPress - A. Kindle Edition.

<sup>ii</sup> Paul told the Ephesians they could live "under the controlling influence" of the Holy Spirit. Here he tells the Roman believers, "In step with the Holy Spirit, there is no sense of failure, no frustration, no beating yourself up. The Spirit can produce every day living that is righteous, good, without condemnation.

<sup>iii</sup> According to [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand\\_Coulee\\_Dam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Coulee_Dam)

<sup>iv</sup> Someone might well wonder about OCD: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a common, chronic and long-lasting disorder in which a person has uncontrollable, reoccurring thoughts (*obsessions*) and behaviors (*compulsions*) that he or she feels the urge to repeat over and over. The **National Institute for Mental Health** explains: **Signs and Symptoms** People with OCD may have symptoms of obsessions, compulsions, or both. These symptoms can interfere with all aspects of life, such as work, school, and personal relationships. **Obsessions** are repeated thoughts, urges, or mental images that cause anxiety. Common symptoms include:

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- Fear of germs or contamination
  - Unwanted forbidden or taboo thoughts involving sex, religion, and harm
  - Aggressive thoughts towards others or self
  - Having things symmetrical or in a perfect order

**Compulsions** are repetitive behaviors that a person with OCD feels the urge to do in response to an obsessive thought. Common compulsions include:

- Excessive cleaning and/or handwashing
- Ordering and arranging things in a particular, precise way
- Repeatedly checking on things, such as repeatedly checking to see if the door is locked or that the oven is off
- Compulsive counting

Not all rituals or habits are compulsions. Everyone double checks things sometimes. But a person with OCD generally:

- Can't control his or her thoughts or behaviors, even when those thoughts or behaviors are recognized as excessive
- Spends at least 1 hour a day on these thoughts or behaviors
- Doesn't get pleasure when performing the behaviors or rituals, but may feel brief relief from the anxiety the thoughts cause
- Experiences significant problems in their daily life due to these thoughts or behaviors

Some individuals with OCD also have a tic disorder. Motor tics are sudden, brief, repetitive movements, such as eye blinking and other eye movements, facial grimacing, shoulder shrugging, and head or shoulder jerking. Common vocal tics include repetitive throat-clearing, sniffing, or grunting sounds.

Symptoms may come and go, ease over time, or worsen. People with OCD may try to help themselves by avoiding situations that trigger their obsessions, or they may use alcohol or drugs to calm themselves. Although most adults with OCD recognize that what they are doing doesn't make sense, some adults and most children may not realize that their behavior is out of the ordinary. Parents or teachers typically recognize OCD symptoms in children.

If you think you have OCD, talk to your doctor about your symptoms. If left untreated, OCD can interfere in all aspects of life

### Treatments and Therapies

OCD is typically treated with medication, psychotherapy or a combination of the two. Although most patients with OCD respond to treatment, some patients continue to experience symptoms.

Sometimes people with OCD also have other mental disorders, such as anxiety, depression, and body dysmorphic disorder, a disorder in which someone mistakenly believes that a part of their body is abnormal. It is important to consider these other disorders when making decisions about treatment.

### Medication

Serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SRIs) and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are used to help reduce OCD symptoms. Examples of medications that have been proven effective in both adults and children with OCD include clomipramine, which is a member of an older class of "tricyclic" antidepressants, and several newer "selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors" (SSRIs), including:

fluoxetine  
fluvoxamine  
sertraline

SRIs often require higher daily doses in the treatment of OCD than of depression, and may take 8 to 12 weeks to start working, but some patients experience more rapid improvement.

If symptoms do not improve with these types of medications, research shows that some patients may respond well to an antipsychotic medication (such as risperidone). Although research shows that an antipsychotic medication may be helpful in managing symptoms for people who have both OCD and a tic disorder, research on the effectiveness of antipsychotics to treat OCD is mixed.

If you are prescribed a medication, be sure you:

Talk with your doctor or a pharmacist to make sure you understand the risks and benefits of the medications you're taking.

Do not stop taking a medication without talking to your doctor first. Suddenly stopping a medication may lead to "rebound" or worsening of OCD symptoms. Other uncomfortable or potentially dangerous withdrawal effects are also possible.

Report any concerns about side effects to your doctor right away. You may need a change in the dose or a different medication.

Report serious side effects to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) MedWatch Adverse Event Reporting program online at <http://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch> or by phone at 1-800-332-1088. You or your doctor may send a report.

Other medications have been used to treat OCD, but more research is needed to show the benefit for these options. For basic information about these medications, you can visit the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Mental Health Medications webpage. For the most up-to-date information on medications, side effects, and warnings, visit the FDA website.

### Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy can be an effective treatment for adults and children with OCD. Research shows that certain types of psychotherapy, including cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) and other related therapies (e.g., habit reversal training) can be as effective as medication for many individuals. Research also shows that a type of CBT called Exposure and Response Prevention (EX/RP) is effective in reducing compulsive behaviors in OCD, even in people who did not respond well to SRI medication. For many patients EX/RP is the add-on treatment of choice when SRIs or SSRIs medication does not effectively treat OCD symptoms.

### Other Treatment Options

NIMH is supporting research into new treatment approaches for people whose OCD does not respond well to the usual therapies. These new approaches include combination and add-on (augmentation) treatments, as well as novel techniques such as deep brain stimulation (DBS). You can learn more about brain stimulation therapies on the NIMH website.

### Finding Treatment

For general information on mental health and to locate treatment services in your area, call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Treatment Referral Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357). SAMHSA also has a Behavioral Health Treatment Locator on its website that can be searched by location. You can also visit the NIMH's Help for Mental Illnesses page for more information and resources.

### Join a Study

Clinical trials are research studies that look at new ways to prevent, detect, or treat diseases and conditions, including OCD. During clinical trials, investigated treatments might be new drugs or new combinations of drugs, new surgical procedures or devices, or new ways to use existing treatments. The goal of clinical trials is to determine if a new test or treatment works and is safe. Although individual participants may benefit from being part of a clinical trial, participants should be aware that the primary purpose of a clinical trial is to gain new scientific knowledge so that others may be better helped in the future.

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd/index.shtml>

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<sup>v</sup> Stott: "The meaning surely is not that people are like this because they think like this, although that is partly true, but that they think like this because they are like this. The expressions are descriptive. In both cases their nature determines their mindset." *Romans – God's Good News for the World*, p.223.

<sup>vi</sup> Bill Norman, Ontario, Canada. *Leadership*, Vol. 16, no. 1.

<sup>vii</sup> Corrie Ten Boom in *Each New Day*. *Christianity Today*, Vol. 38, no. 1

<sup>viii</sup> Stuart Briscoe, "Christmas 365 Days a Year," *Preaching Today*, Tape 135.