

ROMANS

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

STUDY NINETEEN

Cultivating a Spirit-Controlled Life

Romans 8:12–17

*Just release your grip. Sounds so simple. Three monosyllabic words:
let God lead.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

A NEWBORN baby girl is carried upstairs in the loving arms of her mother. A blind man safely crosses the road guided by his well-trained dog. A foreigner explores the best sites of the land by letting the local chauffeur drive his rental car!

Yes, babies rely on their moms' limbs. The blind use the eyes of their four-legged friends. Foreigners can benefit from the expertise of tour guides if they hand them their keys and let them lead. The truth is we all can use some help. No one can get through life completely on his or her own.

Similarly, knowing joy in difficult times, experiencing peace that baffles the human mind, and navigating the roads of life with wisdom are all impossible without divine help! No wonder the apostle Paul turned the attention of his Roman readers to the Holy Spirit—divine help for the Christian journey. With Him behind the wheel, we all can fulfill God's purpose for our lives on earth.

In the prior *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we discovered that our outlook or mind-set—the principle governing our minds and steps—determines the kind of existence we live, whether in the flesh or in the Spirit. Now, we'll build on this principle as we humbly let the Holy Spirit teach us what it means to **let Him lead!**



INSIGHT FOR LIVING

The Bible-Teaching Ministry of Chuck Swindoll
Study 19 • Page 1

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

Cultivating a Spirit-Controlled Life

Romans 8:12–17



PREPARE YOUR HEART

*The LORD says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life.
I will advise you and watch over you.” (Psalm 32:8)*

Express your gratitude to the Lord for His guidance. Make known to Him how much you depend on Him for insight and transformation.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

From beginning to end, our salvation is in God’s hands . . . but what about our sanctification? Who handles our spiritual growth after we’re saved? Some might think sanctification—the process of growing in holiness—is solely our job. Out of gratitude, we must spend our Christian lives paying God back for His gift of salvation, and because it’s an impossible task, sanctification is a lifelong endeavor to pay a debt we can never repay.

How have you understood your role in sanctification?



Observation: The Power of the Spirit

Jesus, however, didn’t expect us to live for Him on our own. When He ascended to heaven, He gave us the Holy Spirit, whom He referred to as our Helper—in Greek, *parakletos*, meaning one who comes alongside to comfort, to support, or to advocate ([John 14:25–26](#)).

So, sanctification isn’t solely up to us to work at as hard as we can. *It’s a work of God*, like justification. Our part is to “follow the Spirit,” Paul said (Romans 8:4). To follow the Spirit means we depend on Him, yield control to Him, cooperate with Him, and invite His power to work through us to accomplish what we could never accomplish on our own.

Cultivating a Spirit-Controlled Life

Romans 8:12–17

In this next section of Romans 8, Paul helps us understand how to follow the Spirit. Use your skills of observation as you read [Romans 8:12–13](#) slowly and thoughtfully. On the negative side, what did Paul say we must stop doing and why?

Positively, what must we start doing, and what are the results?

God gave us His Spirit so we don't have to live like we lived before the cross. We couldn't help it then. Now there's an energy, there's a power, there's a fuel, there's a full tank that never even goes half empty. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Paul quickly turned to four benefits of following the Spirit. Observe [8:14–17](#) in the NLT, NASB, and The Message. Use your observations to explain each benefit below. When we follow the Spirit, we will experience . . .

1. Practical, everyday leading from God (8:14): _____

2. Fearless intimacy with God (8:15): _____

3. Assurance of belonging to God (8:16): _____

4. Reminders of our worth to God (8:17): _____

Since Christ freed us from the bondage of sin, we are no longer obligated to the flesh. God has gifted us with the Holy Spirit to empower us to live the Christian life—*let Him lead!* Let's look closer at what it means to follow the Spirit instead of the flesh.

Cultivating a Spirit-Controlled Life

Romans 8:12–17



Interpretation: Spirit-Led Versus Flesh-Controlled Life

Because the Holy Spirit indwells us, Paul said, we have no “obligation” to the flesh (Romans 8:12). Look up the Greek word *opheiletes*, translated as “obligation,” in the Greek lexicon at billmounce.com. Why do you think Paul used this wording when he wrote, “you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do” (8:12)?

The word obligation means, “restricted to a particular mode of life.” We are not restricted to a mode of life of the flesh. We were before Christ. We are not now. Christ has come in and with Him has come the whole package, including the Holy Spirit—all the empowerment needed to live a life that’s different from what we once lived. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Two outcomes—death and life—result from the master we choose. Reread [Romans 8:13](#) in the NET and J. B. Phillips translations. Explain what Paul meant when he said, if you live in the flesh, “you will die,” but if you live by the Spirit “you will live” (8:13).

A believer who is carrying out his or her life in the energy of the flesh will experience inner turmoil, hostility, resentment, irritability. . . . It’s called death. However, you can live in the power of the Spirit, “putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” What a better way to live, to have Christ in such full control of your life. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

By coming to Christ, we received a fearless intimacy with God when “he adopted [us] as his own children” (8:15). Paul used the Aramaic word *Abba* to describe this closeness. Explore the term [adoption](#) in the *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* at biblestudytools.com. Write this verse using your own words to express the beauty of these concepts.

Cultivating a Spirit-Controlled Life

Romans 8:12–17

I'm a son! You're a daughter of God! And now we call Him, "Daddy." That's what Abba means. It's Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke. An intimate calling on the Father. Before there was that sense of distance, but now, while I hold Him in great respect and awe, I'm connected to Him closely. I am walking with Him under His control. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

We now have the Holy Spirit as our companion and enabler to direct us into real life—the *abundant* life. We can climb the mountains of our destiny, walk in the streets of our calling, and soar like eagles as we cooperate with Him and simply do what He leads us to do.



Correlation: Cooperating with the Holy Spirit!

Our cooperation with the Spirit is vital to our spiritual growth. Compare [Romans 8:14–17](#) with [Ephesians 4:30](#) and [1 Thessalonians 5:19–22](#). What do these verses reveal about the Holy Spirit's leading and the believer's choice?

Think about these commands in [1 Thessalonians 5:14–24](#). What do these verses further highlight about the believer's responsibility to cooperate with the Holy Spirit? What about these commands necessitate God's enablement? Which command caught your attention the most? Why?

His Spirit resides in you. He is giving you the fuel for the engine to run its course as you carry out His will and you say to Him regularly and faithfully, "Not my sin, my sin, my sin, but Christ, Christ, Christ! You're my all in all."
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Cultivating a Spirit-Controlled Life

Romans 8:12–17



Application: Let the Holy Spirit Lead You!

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul summed up God's double-sided work in our lives:

I am certain that God, who began the good work within you [salvation] will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns [sanctification].
(Philippians 1:6)

What God began at salvation, He will complete. Sanctification is the space between the beginning and end. Let's explore a few ways you can cooperate with the Spirit's sanctifying work in you today.

First, what changes of direction has the Holy Spirit highlighted that are needed in your life?

Let God lead. It works against our nature because we are adults, and we've had training, and we're educated. Probably you have a position that's significant and you've relied on to get you through your career. Let God lead. And He will lead in ways that will be surprising. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Second, what practical ways would you like to better yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit?

Cultivating a Spirit-Controlled Life

Romans 8:12–17

Finally, what prayer can you offer the Lord every morning as your intention to let the Spirit lead in the new day? Here's a prayer Pastor Chuck Swindoll prays. Let it inspire you to write your own in the space below.

I start my day saying, “Lord, if I lead myself, I’ll go in the wrong direction. Don’t let me do that. I give You my thoughts today, I give You my day. I ask You to help me when my day is interrupted. Help me when the kids make a lot of demands on me. Help me when there’s difficulty with the neighbor. Help me when I’m at work and such and such occurs. Guide me, lead me.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

As you follow the Spirit, remember you belong to God as His child. You are safe and secure in an intimate, unbreakable Father-child bond, assured of an eternal destiny in His care. What a wonderful way to live—in the loving arms of your *Abba*!



A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Spirit’s presence in me and for Your power always available to me. I confess the many times I’ve not operated in Your strength. Help me lean on Your insight. Help me let You drive, for You know the way. Help me rest in Your arms, remembering that I am Yours forever. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)”

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 2007, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

insight.org

Insight for Living
Study 19 • Page 7

[illegible]