

# Characteristics of Spiritual Young Men and Women

## GETTING READY TO TEACH

Believers might spend several years in the second spiritual development stage that Roger refers to as the Spiritual Young Men and Women stage. A lot of spiritual work or processing occurs during this time in our spiritual lives. It is work. It does require effort. However, the delightful experiences of deepening intimacy with Christ which produce growth in faith, strength of character, and spiritual power make the effort delightfully worthwhile.

The lesson begins with a review of the three traits outlined in 1 John 2:12-14. These were covered in Lesson 5. Roger then outlines five additional development milestones:

- ◆ Young men and women develop a servant's heart as they discover and employ their spiritual gifts in the faith community
- ◆ Spiritual young men and women are learning to be "other-serving" rather than self-serving
- ◆ Spiritual young men and women develop a generous heart that motivates them to excel in grace of giving
- ◆ Spiritual young men and women know the truth of who they are in Christ
- ◆ Because of their increasing strength and understanding, young men and women are especially vulnerable to spiritual pride and overconfidence

While Roger provides some detail for each additional development stage, the emphasis is on the delightful deepening relationship with Christ that the work of this stage facilitates.

The traits relating to spiritual gifts and spiritual warfare probably will prompt more than an average amount of questions in some Bible Fellowship departments. Our goal is to identify the discovery and use of spiritual gifts as well as proficiency in spiritual warfare as milestones in this development stage. Our S.H.A.P.E. and Spiritual Warfare Core Classes are offered several times a year. These classes provide opportunity for our members to glean more information and ask lots of questions. In addition, we will cover these two topics in a future extended Bible Fellowship lesson series.

The last trait discussion focuses on the spiritual young adults' tendency to struggle with pride. This is an important dialogue. It sets the stage for Lessons 9 and 10 in the series. Those lessons will turn our attention away from the more exciting traits of the spiritual growth stages and call our attention again to the hard work of the processing away of sinful bondages.

One last thought—take time to carefully outline your material presentations. You will have enough time to cover the big ideas and accomplish the learning and experiential objectives. However, it will also be easy to be drawn into chasing rabbits because of the topics being presented.

May God give you wisdom as you prepare and serve His Word to those who have been entrusted to your ministry.



## STUDYING THE WORD TOGETHER

Roger Barrier

Jesse Penn-Lewis<sup>1</sup> postulates three categories of Christians. Category one Christians are what she calls “Unsundered-Deceived.” These spiritual children have not yet considered full surrender to the Lord Jesus. They may read of His commands in Scripture but have little or no intention of fulfilling them. Jesus taught that the top two commandments are to love God and love others, but spiritual children are still selfishly concerned for their own needs to the degree that they often fail to consider the needs of others. Jesus taught that the tithe should be offered to the Lord but they rarely tithe. The Un-sundered-Deceived are duped into thinking either that the world of demonic spiritual forces does not exist or that it has harmless interaction in our physical dimension.

Category two Christians are “Sundered-Deceived.” These surrendered Christians are ready to follow the Lord. They want to please Him. They are learning to love others as they love themselves. Because Jesus says to tithe, the spiritually young men and women immediately calculate ten percent of their income and give it back to Him. While they are keenly aware of the world of spirits, they are conned into thinking that everything spiritual comes from God. Thus they often miss the deceptive workings of Satan and fall prey to all sorts of satanic counterfeits.

Category three Christians are “Sundered-Undeceived.” Not only have they dealt with the issues of life-long surrender, they have enough experience with the spiritual world to know that not every spirit comes from God. They are skilled in knowing what is of God—and what is not.

It is my experience that transitioning from spiritual children to spiritual young men and women may parallel the transition from category one to category two. At the commencement of spiritual adolescence the desire to go on with Christ is powerful. By the time the teenage and young adult years are drawing to a close, a fully surrendered, undeceived Christ Follower has emerged. The best years are now to come.

### Maturity Insight 9: Spiritual Young Men and Women Delight in Their Deepening Relationship with Christ As They Grow in Strength and Understanding

In the previous lesson we examined some of the characteristics of spiritual children. In this lesson, we will outline the characteristics of spiritual

young men and women. First we will review the three characteristics that John outlined in 1 John 2:14. Then we will examine several traits from other parts of the Scriptures. Of course the lists we detail are not exhaustive, but they will help us get a sense of what this growth stage looks like. Remember, our hope is to know with fair certainty how far along we are on the journey.

✿ I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one. 1 John 2:14

<sup>1</sup> Jesse Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, (Whitaker House, New Kensington, PA, 1996)

Review: Three Basic Characteristics from 1 John

*Spiritual Young Men and Women Are Strong*

You will remember that in Lesson 5, I said that Strong's ἰσχύω, *ischuros* [is-khoo-ros'] (NT:2478) refers to the spiritual power that swells in us because of our progressively deepening intimacy with the Word of God (Christ) and our expanding knowledge of the content of the inspired written Word (Scripture). Spiritual young men and women are not impotent! Rather through both their intimate relationship with Christ and their knowledge of Scripture, they are strengthened, tempered, or made powerful to live out their Christian faith in a way that allows others to see Christ in them.

Young men and women are spiritually strong because they are growing both in relationship with Christ the Word and in their knowledge of the written Word. As they become more intimate with Christ and experience the transformation that such intimacy brings, they reflect more of His glory and experience more of His power. As spiritual young men and women grow in their knowledge of the written Word, they better understand its application for their lives and for the lives of others. Together with the authority they have in Christ, it becomes a formidable weapon in their hands used to overcome the evil one.

*The Word of God Lives in Spiritual Young Men and Women*

You will recall from previous lessons that the term *Word of God* as used by John primarily refers to the Lord Jesus. John's gospel began:

In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.  
(John 1:1)

In verse 14 he declared:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.  
(John 1:14)

*Word* is the English translation of the Greek word λογος (*logos*). Logos was a Greek philosophical term that referred to the unrevealed wisdom of God. John declared that the unrevealed wisdom of God put on a human body and lived on earth for all to see. His first epistle began:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.  
(1 John 1:1-3)

Not only had the logos become flesh, not only had John and his companions touched and felt and seen God in a body, they actually had fellowship with the God and Father of the universe through their relationship with Jesus.

At the moment of our spiritual birth, the living Lord Jesus indwells our spirit. The moment that we receive Christ we become partakers of the divine nature: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27), Paul taught.

The life of the Lord Jesus takes hold of spiritual young men and women. His Life is the real source that enables young men and women to grow strong. Out of their deepening relationship with Jesus, spiritual adolescents are developing the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:1-12)—so it is no surprise





that they look and act a lot like Christ. They are moving into a deeper knowledge and experience of the life and person of Christ.

While the term *Word of God* referred primarily to Jesus Christ, as we move along in our spiritual journey we will appreciate the broader implications of the term. We refer often to the Bible as the Word of God. The Bible is the written Word. Young men and women not only are mastering the Bible's content but also they are making relevant, practical applications of the written Word of God for themselves and for others. Spiritual adolescents begin developing skills of shepherding, counseling, and caring for spiritual children.

We would not trust a seven-year-old to baby sit a five-year-old. But we might trust a seventeen-year-old to take care of the five-year-old. Teenagers are starting to take care of others. Spiritual teenagers who know the Word of God are in a position to guide and direct spiritual lambs. By definition those who do not know the Word of God and how to apply it wisely are still children.

If we are going to shepherd little lambs we must know the content of the Bible so that we can apply the Word for their profit and edification. This is another reason why young men and women are strong. Their knowledge of the Bible puts them in a powerful shepherding position.

Knowing the Word of God is critical to maturity in Christ. That is why Peter pleaded, "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (1 Peter 2:2). Spiritual young men and women know that the Words of God are bread and life. Spiritual young men and women meet God on the pages of Scripture. The Word of God is a powerful tool in their hands.

Needless to say, it is possible to know all about the Bible and still be spiritually immature—like the Pharisees! Proper use of the Bible manifests the strength of young men and women. Once the written Word of God is

hidden in the heart, then experience, practice, and the Holy Spirit combine to enable the spiritually mature to handle the Word for fruitful, profitable ministry.

### *Spiritual Young Men and Women Understand Spiritual Warfare*

We struggle against three enemies in the Christian life: the world, the devil, and the flesh (old self, old nature).

First John 5:4 says that spiritual young men and women have overcome the world. In 1 John 2:14, the apostle explains that spiritual young men and women have overcome the evil one. Two enemies, the world and the evil one, are overcome during the first two stages of spiritual development. We might naturally assume that the flesh is overcome by the third. Surely spiritual mothers and fathers are no longer tempted by the lusts of the flesh! No, nothing could be farther from the truth. We will struggle with the flesh until the day we finally enter into Heaven's glory.

The word *overcome* used here means to conquer, to master, to prevail over, to make helpless, to overpower, or to overwhelm. John meant that spiritual young men and women know how to use the spiritual strength or power placed in them by Christ and, acting in His authority, take on the evil one and win! This involves battle training and experience.

In another sense, the word *overcome* means to be no longer deceived by Satan's workings and devices. Satan's basic work against Christians is accomplished with lies and deceit. His basic tools are temptations, accusations, and insinuations. Remember how Satan tried to overcome Job. The test between God and Satan was over whether or not Satan could get Job to curse God. The evil one tried to sneak in the back door of Job's life by deceiving Mrs. Job into tempting him to "Curse God and die." Spiritual young men and women are no longer deceived by the workings of

the evil one. Not only are they able to defend themselves adequately in battle, they also are able to help those who have been ensnared in the enemy's traps.

#### More Characteristics from Other Passages of Scripture

#### *Spiritual Young Men and Women Develop a Servant's Heart As They Discover and Employ Their Spiritual Gifts in the Faith Community*

In lesson four we discussed being an image bearer of Christ, saying the anticipated result of ongoing spiritual growth is a progressively increasing Christ-likeness. Let's think about what this might mean in terms of service. John said:

In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him [Christ]. (1 John 4:17)

Jesus described himself as a servant and urged his followers to serve one another.

☞ The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22:25-27)

Paul connected serving one another to the Great Commandment.

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single

command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Galatians 5:13-14)

It logically follows that we cannot grow to spiritual maturity without developing a servant's heart. Could it be true that our heart for service might be shaped through our experiences of Christ serving us? Can you imagine that our heart for service might be developed as we practice meeting the needs of family members, friends and neighbors, as well as our spiritual brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ—the church?

One way we serve the Body of Christ is to discover and employ our spiritual gifts in a manner that helps others grow to maturity.

☞ It was he [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ...[S]peaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head...From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each member does its [his/her] work. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

By God's design, our most profitable service will be in the area of the specific spiritual gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit at our conversion. Because young men and women are discovering and practicing their gifts, their productiveness for the kingdom increases dramatically.

The more immature the Christian, the more God uses the activity of service to mature His child. The very nature of Christian service means that it is useful in building up the serving Christian as well

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as in helping others. Conversely, the more mature the Christian, the more profitable the service is to God's Kingdom—and the less the service is needed to mature the growing Christian.

The early days of our Christian lives are often taken up with externals. But soon, God begins His cross-centered work of transitioning us from what we do into what he wants us to be. As that transition takes place, a growing Christian sees his or her ministry for Jesus take on broader spiritual dimensions. His or her earlier efforts seem like the stumbling of a mere toddler. It is all right to stumble when first learning how to walk, but soon it is time to be walking and running in the Christian faith. The days of tottering are over.

The spiritual children in Corinth were arguing over the use of spiritual gifts. Remember that one of the characteristics of children is arguing and quarrelling with other children. Young men and women don't argue over spiritual giftings; they are involved in discovering their personal spiritual gifts and how to utilize them properly.

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts....  
(1 Corinthians 14:1)

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.... let him use it in proportion to his faith.  
(Romans 12:6)

The spiritual gifts are grouped in three separate contexts in the New Testament (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12-14; and Eph. 4). Some overlapping occurs. We have organized the spiritual gifts into three categories that describe their usefulness in Kingdom work. Some of these gifts really describe a spiritual office in the church which is empowered by the corresponding gift of the same name.

- ◆ **Gifts for Reaching People:**  
Apostleship, Evangelism, Healing, Mercy, Miracles

- ◆ **Gifts for Maturing Christians:**  
Distinguishing Spirits, Encouragement, Faith, Helps (a.k.a. Service), Word of Knowledge, Prophecy, Teaching, Tongues / Interpreting Tongues, Word of Wisdom
- ◆ **Organizing the Church:**  
Administration, Leadership, Pastor-Teacher (a.k.a. Shepherding)

It seems that every Christian is given at least one gift at conversion. It may lie dormant for awhile as the spiritual infant matures. We have come to call these early impartations "driving force" gifts. They seem to remain with the believer throughout his/her ministering life. Other gifts can be made available to us and may be thought of in terms of a tool box full of tools. At times God may utilize a particular gift on a short-term basis in our lives because of a particular moment's need in the Body of Christ. As we manage well our initial gift, and as our ministries expand, we may ask God for other gifts under the direction of the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit.

It is very important for us to understand that spiritual gifts are not simply special abilities or talents. Such innate abilities are often a function of both personality and skill development. Rather than being innate abilities, spiritual gifts are a manifestation of God's power that is evident when the gifted believer is submitted to the Holy Spirit. We know that a spiritual gift is being exercised when we experience God's power being displayed through the one employing the gift. For example, we may describe a person operating powerfully in his/her area of giftedness as being "anointed." Congregations become spiritually impotent when members do not freely and responsibly allow the Holy Spirit to manifest God's power through the gifts He has given.

#### *Spiritual Young Men and Women Learn to Be “Other-Serving” Rather than Self-Serving*

You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. (Acts 20:34)

🔥 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:4)

**H**ave you ever noticed how little children seldom become upset when their older brothers and sisters have problems? Three-year-olds cry when they do not get their way, but they hardly, if ever, cry when their twelve-year-old brother does not get his way. When you are three years old, the whole world revolves around you.

When Brianna was two years old, she threw down an oven thermometer which had a long needle designed to sink deeply into meat and measure temperature as it cooks. It happened that Julie was walking by barefooted, and the long point of the needle pierced her foot. Brie was more concerned about the coming discipline for throwing the thermometer than she was about her mother’s tears. In fact, I do not think she even noticed that Mom was hurting. After all, she was just a tiny child.

Children do not notice when somebody else is hurting. They are too self-centered. One of the marks of a young man and young woman is that they are growing toward an “others-centered” mentality.

**A**n intriguing survey was taken among American evangelical teenagers. The researchers identified two basic lifestyles. Lifestyle number one focused primarily on personal recognition, pleasure, personal freedom, power, money, physical appearance and

attractiveness. Lifestyle number two was more of an other-centered view of things. The tendency here was toward service, responsibility, meaningful work, wisdom, honesty, giving and receiving love, forgiving, and family happiness. Among the sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds who were analyzed, only twenty-four percent gravitated toward lifestyle number two—rather than being self-centered, they were other-centered. Seventy-six percent gravitated toward the “me-first” philosophy of lifestyle number one.

The significant fact is that by the time these same sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds got to the age of twenty-three and twenty-four, fully fifty percent now gravitated toward lifestyle two. This was to be expected. Teenagers and children tend to look so much at “me and my needs.” That is all right for children or teenagers. But as we grow up, as we mature, we start thinking a little less about ourselves and start focusing more on others.

This principle is true in the church as well. Little spiritual children tend to look at themselves first. They whine if they do not get their way. They complain if things do not go as they want. That is how children are. Then as they grow from childhood to young manhood or young womanhood, they stop gazing so much at themselves. They begin to say, “What is best for the whole church? How can I surrender my own desires in order to build bridges to reach others who are not yet in the church?” They choose to submit their will, often, for the best of others. They begin to be involved in ministry and service, because their heart’s desire is to take care of somebody else. They are just getting ready for spiritual motherhood and fatherhood. They start taking care of other people instead of always being the one who needs to be receiving care from others.





### *Spiritual Young Men and Women Develop a Generous Heart That Motivates Them to Excel in the Grace of Giving*

Developing a generous heart is one of the toughest challenges faced by men and women wanting to become spiritual young adults. Our natural bent toward selfishness gets in our way. However, generosity is one of God's defining attributes. James describes God as the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). John, the Apostle, draws a clear connection between loving and giving.

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:7-10)

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

It is simple. God loves; therefore, He gives. We love one another; therefore, we give. In our giving as Christ's image bearers, we reflect His generous heart to everyone who experiences our generosity. We give from our resources to meet one another's physical needs, emotional or relational needs, and spiritual needs. Part of the way we give to one another in the more global sense is to give to the Body of Christ.

Spiritual young men and women are having the kinds of experiences that enable them to grow in their trust and faith in God. It is now that they are challenged to "test" God by tithing their material and

financial resources for the advancement of the Kingdom. Our bent toward self-reliance, selfishness and self-condemnation scream No! What a challenge! But God gives us grace to become like Christ. He gives us grace to excel in our giving. Reflect on these instructions and encouragements from Paul:

☞ And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.

Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. (2 Corinthians 8:1-7)

It is clear. Developing a generous heart is part of becoming a spiritual young man or woman. It is delightful to experience God's grace as He pours in the power and provides the resources that allow us to excel in our giving.

### *Spiritual Young Men and Women Know the Truth of Who They Are in Christ*

A small cartoon depicted a teenage boy and girl both looking into amusement park distortion mirrors. In reality, the young man is rather slightly built, but he looks into the mirror and sees



a big strong, muscular guy. The young lady, who is rather thin and well proportioned, holds an ice cream cone and looks into a different mirror. The reflection that she sees is that of a very overweight girl. If these two teenagers based their view of themselves on the reflections seen in the distortion mirrors, they would embrace self-images based on lies rather than truth.

Spiritual young men and young women know who they are in Christ. They are powerful creatures in the hands of God in Christ.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. (Romans 12:3)

☀️ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3)

Like those teenagers in the amusement park, believers transitioning from the spiritual childhood years into young adulthood are trying to answer identity issues questions: Who am I? What am I like? What is my role in life? It is important that they answer these questions based upon the truth of Scripture rather than the lies of Satan. That's why many spiritual adolescents find that they are drawn to the Bible books of Colossians and Ephesians. These two books, more than most others, teach us who we are and what we have in Jesus Christ. Here they begin to appropriate such truths as I am accepted in Christ; I am loved by the Creator of the universe; I am God's child; I am forgiven; I am justified; I am never separated from the love of Christ; I am an overcomer; and I am victorious and content because of Jesus Christ Who pours in the power in every situation.

Young men and young women look at themselves and think: In my flesh, in myself, I may not be much. But in Jesus Christ, I'm really something special. God has poured in the life and the power. They see themselves not as they are in their corrupted humanity, but as who they are in Christ. Those who have good understanding and acceptance of themselves in Christ are moving strongly out of childhood.

### *Because of Their Increasing Strength and Understanding, Young Men and Women Are Especially Vulnerable to Spiritual Pride and Overconfidence*

Just as spiritual children show signs of immaturity, so do the spiritually adolescent. The evidence that young men and women are not yet spiritual mothers and fathers most often manifests first as pride in their strength and knowledge, and then in ministry zealously done—too much in their own strength.

Thinking that we know more than others often leads to spiritual pride. Have you ever tried to tell a teenager something? They get a little knowledge and they think, I'm smarter than Dad, or I'm smarter than Mom. I am not knocking that. I was the same way when I was a teenager. Arrogance is often the result of gaining knowledge. We have yet to learn how little we really know about anything. If we are not careful, we will soon puff up and be fuller of ourselves than we are of God.

☀️ Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know.

(1 Corinthians 8:1-2)



Paul discussed in 1 Corinthians 8 the problem of weaker brothers, stronger brothers, and food sacrificed to idols. Stronger brothers compassionately and caringly yield their behaviors and freedom in Christ so as not to offend the consciences of weaker brothers. The stronger brothers are to help their weaker brothers grow up to more freedom in Christ. If we are not careful, pride in our knowledge will lead us into a ministry of condemnation rather than a ministry of loving edification.

The other danger here is “Pharisee-ism.” This is the puffed-up attitude that says I know the Bible better than you. I will tell you how to believe and behave because I know more than you do. Do it my way because my way is the only way. These puffed-up people are legalistic killers of grace and of the indwelling life of Christ.

**M**ore evidence that spiritual young men and women are not yet spiritual elders is displayed in zealous idealism. Too many times I have seen Christians get turned on to Christ and start growing and learning. In the midst of their whole-hearted devotion to the Kingdom, they forget to rest and pace themselves. They think that the victory belongs to them instead of to God. A few years later they have given up Christianity or they have given up on growth and service. They are burned-out, rusting hulks sitting as “quitters” in our congregation on Sunday.

Who are these exhausted people? Too often they are dedicated, spiritually-minded people who tried to serve and live the abundant life in their own strength. In their zealous busyness of serving others, they became relationally disconnected from Christ, the real source of spiritual power. They forgot that spiritual growth is more about building relationship with Jesus than it is doing things “for God.” Of course we want to serve others. But we want to serve in a manner that reflects Christ’s loving nature to others. We can’t bless

others with His Love, when our own intimate relationship with Him is too lacking.

Frankly, I have advised many Christians who have come to our church worn-out and spiritually exhausted to sit back in church on Sundays and rest and recover. I know that as they reconnect at a more intimate level with Christ, they will find new excitement and strength for serving Him and others. I encourage them: When you’re ready, we’ll get you back in service again. Consider this time as recovery time in a spiritual hospital. Our goal is to help you get healed and well.

**A**s I close this lesson in my classroom, I always try to encourage my students at this point. Be encouraged. God’s heart-desire is that we become spiritual men and women. It is worth it at any price.

Christ makes a marvelous model, doesn’t he? Luke observed, “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). That simple verse summarizes eighteen years of Christ’s life. When He was a teenager—at the age of twelve—He was marveling His elders in the Temple. At thirty He began His public ministry. During those years He grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and in favor with man. May the same be said of us as we mature as young men and women.

Why don’t you pause a moment to pray. You might want to pray like this:

Father, you do such precious things for me. I know that You are so intricately interested in my spiritual growth and development, because with all Your heart, You want me to be the spiritual man (or woman)

You have designed me to be.

Father, please place within me a hungry desire to mature and develop both in my spiritual life and in my relationship with you.

How I thank you!

## COMMENTARY



Roger discusses two traits of spiritual young men and women in this lesson that find broad expression in the community life of Casas: the discovery and use of spiritual gifts and the practice of spiritual warfare on behalf of individuals, the church, the community, and the world.

### SPIRITUAL GIFTS

To both discover and begin using one's spiritual gifts is an important milestone in the ongoing process of spiritual growth. The material that follows will briefly outline some key elements of our theology regarding the gifts of the Spirit.

Most references to spiritual gifts are found in Paul's epistles to the churches located in Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus. Specific lists of the gifts are found in Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, and Ephesians 4:11-12. The Ephesians passage identifies offices or roles in the church. It is logical to assume that those filling the offices had corresponding gifts of the Spirit that could be called by the same name.

#### Word Study

Paul primarily uses two word groups when teaching about spiritual gifts: χάρισμα, *charisma* (khar'-is-mah) (NT: 5486) and πνευματικός, *pneumatikos* (pnyoo-mat-ik-os') (NT: 4152).

In the New Testament *charisma* is used only to refer to gifts and graces imparted from God. *Charisma* (formed from the noun *charis* meaning grace) is the instantaneous enablement of the Holy

Spirit in the life of the believer to exercise a gift for the edification (building up or maturing) of others. When the believer serves others through a Holy Spirit imparted grace gift, the power of God is manifested or displayed in the faith community to bring about maturation in other believers.

*Pneumatikos* is an adjective derived from the noun *pneuma*, meaning spirit or spiritual. It is always used to refer to spiritual things communicated or imparted by the Holy Spirit. In Romans 1:11, *chárisma pneumatikón*, "a spiritual gift," means a gift relating to the mind or spirit of Christians as enlightened and quickened by the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Discovery and Expression of Spiritual Gifts at Casas

Casas leadership has long desired for the Holy Spirit to freely move and powerfully manifest within our congregation. We have witnessed many workings of the Spirit over the years. God regularly displays His love for us as our members humbly submit themselves to Him. The Holy Spirit works routinely through Casas members who have gifts of healing, teaching, encouragement, wisdom, knowledge, discernment, prophecy, administration, and leadership. His love and power is being made clear to us.

There are some guiding beliefs and principles that have served us well as we help members of our church discover and mature in the use of their spiritual gifts.

In 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul stresses the importance of spiritual gifts being used in an orderly manner. So we have developed some simple Biblical guidelines in large congregational assemblies regarding the

<sup>2</sup> Information adapted from *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* © 1992 by AMG International, Inc. Revised Edition, 1993)



expression of those gifts that either can be easily counterfeited by Satan or cause division in the body.

We believe that: All Christians have received at least one spiritual gift at the time of their conversion; the Holy Spirit imparts gifts as He chooses; not all believers receive the same gift; we can pray for gifts but God is under no obligation to give any particular gift to a particular believer.

We believe that spiritual gifts are discovered, tested, confirmed, and expressed in the faith community for edifying, building up, and maturing of the Body.

A “core class” called S.H.A.P.E. is offered each trimester for those who are interested in discovering how God might wish to work through them based upon their spiritual gifts, heart motivations, natural abilities, personality style, and life experiences. In addition, a portion of the spring unified Bible Fellowship study will feature a section on spiritual gifts.

### **SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

**S**piritual warfare is a term that has long been used in the historic church to reference the conflict that exists between God and Satan. The warfare motif or theme runs through Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

Western cultures typically have a worldview that assumes two discrete functional realms—the supernatural realm where God and spirit beings operate and the natural realm which operates according to natural laws. This natural realm in which we live is believed to function without much interaction with the supernatural realm. In this worldview, the natural realm is being run by scientific laws that have no functional spiritual components.

Our Biblical worldview allows us to see that these two realms are, in fact, in regular constant functional contact with each other. God is not an impersonal force far removed, but a personal, interactive being—a loving Heavenly Father concerned for and looking after His children. A Biblical worldview also includes contact with Satan and his demonic forces whose objective is to mar and destroy the created work of God. This means that Satan and his forces work to prevent men from knowing God and to weaken and handicap Christians (Rom. 8:19-21; 1 Cor. 10:31).

**J**esus spent a significant portion of His earthly ministry dealing with Satan and the demonic (1 John 3:8; Mark 1:26-28). The authority to deal with the demonic was passed on to the disciples and the seventy-two (Luke 10:1, 17). Luke's account of the early church shows that they continued Jesus' mission of preaching, healing, and destroying the devil's work (Acts 1:8). Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 6:10-20 affirms our mission to continue the work of Jesus that He set forth when He quoted Isaiah 61, proclaiming freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners (Luke 4:16-27). It is our responsibility as a Bible-believing church to take seriously this mandate from Jesus to continue to facilitate His work through the Holy Spirit that sets free those Satan has led into captivity (2 Tim. 2:26).

### *Individual and Corporate Expressions of Spiritual Warfare at Casas*

**T**he model used at Casas to help people understand how to deal with enemy attacks is called “Freedom Ministry” and was developed by Dr. Neil Anderson. The Seven Steps to Freedom process employed in the Freedom Ministry is understood as a truth encounter rather than a “power” encounter utilized in other deliverance models. It provides an opportunity for believers who

are demonized<sup>3</sup> to systematically review areas of their lives and renounce lies and deceptions, while announcing and appropriating the truth of Scripture for their lives. Trained ministry volunteers serve as facilitating prayer partners in the process. Individuals with questions can contact Casas' Pastoral Services for information.

Casas has provided teaching and training in spiritual warfare since 1983 through sermons and core classes. The spiritual warfare core class is offered three to four times per year. We will present a thirteen-week Bible Fellowship lesson series on spiritual warfare in the fall of 2006.

*Notes* 

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<sup>3</sup> Scripture does not teach that Christians can be *demon possessed*—owned by demons. Believers can be attacked, harassed, or influenced by demonic spirits, resulting in the neutralization of their Christian witness. The Greek word that Scripture uses to communicate this idea can be translated as “demonized” or “demonization.”

## Lesson 7

# The Prayer God Always Answers

## Characteristics of Spiritual Young Men and Women



### RESOURCES

#### NEEDED:

- ◆ 2-sided copies of Lesson Notes / Take-Home pages
- ◆ Pencils or pens for each person
- ◆ Dry erase markers and marker board or felt tip markers and a flip chart
- ◆ Song sheets, transparency, and/or CD/ Cassette of an upbeat praise song for Step Six
- ◆ Overhead projector if you use a transparency for your praise song

### ADVANCE

#### PREP:

- ◆ Optional: Recruit people to give quick “popcorn testimonies” about serving or giving in Step 4

### TIME FRAME:

- ◆ 45 minutes

## LESSON PLAN

### Focal Scriptures:

- ◆ 1 John 2:14
- ◆ Luke 22:25-27
- ◆ Ephesians 4:11-16
- ◆ Philippians 2:4
- ◆ 2 Corinthians 8:1-7
- ◆ 1 Corinthians 8:1-2

### Maturity Insights Covered in This Lesson:

- ◆ **Maturity Insight 9:** Spiritual Young Men and Women Delight in Their Deepening Relationship with Christ As They Grow in Strength and Understanding

### Teaching Goals:

- ◆ Learn: Develop a good understanding of all of the characteristics or traits of spiritual young men and women
- ◆ Learn: Know that spiritual young men and women often struggle with spiritual pride and overconfidence
- ◆ Experience: Offer praise to God and Father to our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3)

### Before Class Begins:

- ◆ To save time as you teach, write the outline from **LESSON NOTES** on your marker board or flip chart . Then as you teach each point, simply fill in the blanks.
- ◆ Place handouts on chairs or tables.

### STEP ONE: GETTING READY TO LEARN (5 MINUTES)

- ◆ Form groups of 5-6 people to collaborate on “A Depiction of Youth” exercise on their Lesson Notes page. Devise in advance and share your own example.
- ◆ Allow them to work for 3 minutes and then report to the balance of the class for an additional 2 minutes.
- ◆ Transition Statement: Let’s see if there is any similarity between these descriptions of youth and the characteristics of spiritual young men and women.

### STEP TWO: SPIRITUAL YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN DELIGHT IN THEIR DEEPENING RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST AS THEY GROW IN STRENGTH AND UNDERSTANDING (3 MINUTES)

- ◆ Summarize the three categories of Christians which Roger mentions at the top of page 7-2. Celebrate the ongoing and evolving growth toward maturity.
- ◆ **Complete Maturity Insight 10 (the text from Step 2)** on the marker board or flip chart.
- ◆ State that we’ll review characteristics from 1 John, then learn what other passages tell us. Read, or have a volunteer read, 1 John 2:14.

**NOTE:** The 🗨️ icon marks passages shown on **Lesson Notes**. Read these aloud.



**STEP THREE: REVIEW OF THREE BASIC CHARACTERISTICS FROM 1 JOHN (7 MINUTES)**

- ◆ You'll want to move this section quickly, since for most of your class it will be a review. Hit the main points and move on.
- ◆ Take care, however, not to present just the knowledge and behavioral aspects of this growth phase. Stress the essential element of a deepening relationship with Christ.

**STEP FOUR: MORE CHARACTERISTICS FROM OTHER PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE (25 MINUTES)**

- ◆ As mentioned in **GETTING READY TO TEACH**, your classmates may have more questions about spiritual gifts and spiritual warfare than you will have time to address. Encourage them to attend Casas' Core Classes: Discovering Casas (aka New Members Class), S.H.A.P.E. (which includes details about Casas' beliefs on spiritual gifts), and Spiritual Warfare.
- ◆ You've an average of only five minutes for each characteristic in this section. The subtopics on spiritual gifts and on pride and overconfidence require more attention to detail. Plan and watch your time carefully.
- ◆ As you teach each characteristic, remember to fill in the blanks on your marker board or flip chart.
- ◆ Choose how much detail to present in each subtopic according to the needs and maturity of your classmates. Familiarize yourself with the **COMMENTARY** (pp. 7-11-13).

◆ **Spiritual Gifts:** Before you teach this section, ask for a show of hands in each of these categories:

- 1) How many are brand new to the concept of spiritual gifts?
- 2) How many have a beginning understanding of spiritual gifts?
- 3) How many know Casas' beliefs about spiritual gifts?
- 4) How many know their spiritual gifts and are serving in the area of their strengths?

Use the passages from **LESSON NOTES** to teach the value of servanthood and the purpose of spiritual gifts. Adjust other information you present in this section according to the knowledge levels in your class.

◆ **“Other-Serving” Rather Than Self-Serving:** This section is a great place to give kudos to those who serve others in any way.

Idea: Enlist in advance someone who serves in a ministry that is especially meaningful to him or her. Give the person a strict time limit of 1-2 minutes to relate how they have been blessed by serving others.

◆ **A Generous Heart That Motivates Them to Excel in the Grace of Giving:** Here is another good place for a “popcorn testimony” from someone who hesitated to trust God with his or her finances, but has discovered the joy and blessing of generosity.

As you or someone else reads the passage from 2 Corinthians, call attention to the joy they had in giving, despite their difficult circumstances that Paul describes.

◆ **The Truth of Who They Are in Christ:** This is one of the most exciting aspects of spiritual young men and women. We will use the Ephesians 1:3 passage in our closing celebration today. Wait until then to read it aloud.

## Lesson 7

# The Prayer God Always Answers

## Characteristics of Spiritual Young Men and Women

Notes 

- ◆ **Especially Vulnerable to Spiritual Pride and Overconfidence:** For those in the early stages of this development phase, hearing this characteristic can be a real eye-opener—or a bone of contention. Take care to present the information gently, but confidently. Consider disclosing an example of how you have struggled—or perhaps still struggle—with these tendencies.

Stress that these tendencies are just as natural a part of spiritual development as hormones are to physical development. Awareness can help you minimize—and progressively, avoid—negative consequences in this growth phase. Encourage your classmates—and yourself, if you recognize these traits in you—to resist the temptation to continually ask, *Are we there yet?* or to think *I can't wait to grow up!* Be determined to enjoy the journey, rather than anxious to arrive at a destination. Stop to smell the roses along the way!

## STEP SIX: CLOSING CELEBRATION (5 MINUTES)

- ◆ Before you lead the final celebration, you may want to pray Roger's prayer from the end of the **WORD STUDY** (p. 7-10).
- ◆ You or a volunteer read Ephesians 1:3. Then lead your class in stating aloud the spiritual blessings we have in Christ. Ask a volunteer to write them on the marker board as they are called out.
- ◆ Take a moment to celebrate the list of blessings. Lead in an applause offering. If you or someone in your class is musically gifted, lead in a praise chorus that your class will know (such as "Celebrate Jesus, Celebrate!") If no one can lead, consider playing a CD or cassette recording of an upbeat praise song.
- ◆ Call attention to the Reflections on the Take-Home page. Invite everyone to return next week for *Characteristics of Spiritual Mothers and Fathers*.

Characteristics of Spiritual Young Men and Women

# Today in My Department

## A Depiction of Youth

Work in groups to develop a definition, thumbnail sketch, or quip that depicts the physical life stage known as *young men or women*. You may devise a serious, catchy, and/or funny statement. Have fun; be creative.



When your teacher directs, be prepared to share your characterization with the rest of the class.

### MATURITY INSIGHT 9:

Spiritual young men and women delight in their deepening \_\_\_\_\_ with Christ as they grow in \_\_\_\_\_ and understanding.

### Review of Three Basic Characteristics from 1 John:

- ◆ Spiritual young men and women are \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◆ The \_\_\_\_\_ lives in spiritual young men and women.
- ◆ Spiritual young men and women understand spiritual \_\_\_\_\_.

### More Characteristics: Spiritual young men and women...

- ◆ Develop a \_\_\_\_\_ heart as they discover and employ their \_\_\_\_\_ in the faith community.
- ◆ Learn to be “\_\_\_\_\_ -serving” rather than self-serving.
- ◆ Develop a \_\_\_\_\_ heart that motivates them to excel in the grace of \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◆ Know the \_\_\_\_\_ of who they are in Christ.
- ◆ Because of their increasing strength and understanding, are especially vulnerable to spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

**Ephesians 1:3:** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

*For what spiritual blessings in Christ will you praise God the Father?*

## Today’s Scriptures

**1 John 2:14:** I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

**Luke 22:25-27:** Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them.... But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.”

**Ephesians 4:11-16:** It was he who gave some to be apostles,...prophets,...evangelists, and...pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

**Philippians 2:4:** Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

**2 Corinthians 8:1-7:** ... Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity....They gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability....They urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us--see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

**1 Corinthians 8:1-2:** ...We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know.

### Next Week’s Lesson:

*Characteristics of Spiritual Mothers and Fathers*

## Characteristics of Spiritual Young Men and Women

## Daily Reflections

**Monday:** *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).*

Have you paused lately to thank God for His Word—both the written and the living Word? Think about it: From the creation narrative to end times prophecies, we have a love letter from the heart of God in his written Word. He could have sent only the instructions—but He also sent Jesus, that we would know His heart in flesh and blood. Reflect on His grace and truth. Praise Him!

**Tuesday:** *In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him (1 John 4:17).*

Like Jesus in this world. Think about that! Imagine what it was like to be around Jesus. How joyful it must have been for the disciples and for Martha, Mary, and Lazarus just to hang out with Him! And what an awesome thought: Love is made complete among us! How full is your love tank? If it's low, "hang out" with Jesus. Meditate on His word, His works; sing praises; walk and talk with Him; obey Him. Remember: As we spend time with people, we tend to become like them!

**Wednesday:** *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:13-14).*

For some of us, loving our neighbor as ourselves means we don't love our neighbor very well. The implication of this scripture is that first, we must love ourselves. Self-love is not the same as self-centeredness. Self-love says: I am valuable. I am a child of the King. I have a really big Daddy Who loves me. He created me with purpose, and He is in the process of fulfilling His purpose in my life. If loving yourself is a heavy burden, surrender it to Him. Ask Him to show you how and give you courage to love yourself *and* your neighbor well!

**Thursday:** *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you (Romans 12:3).*

We need to love ourselves well—but we need not become conceited nor arrogant. Eugene Peterson puts it this way: "It's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him."<sup>1</sup> We are dependent upon Him even for how much faith we have! If you lean toward conceit or arrogance, confess your error to Him. Ask Him to help you change from arrogance to humility.

**Friday:** *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).*

God so loved that He gave. He gave something that hurt Him, that cost Him dearly—His Son, a part of Himself. How much do you give to those you love? Not just money or things you can buy with it. How much of yourself? Your time? Your listening ear? Your encouragement, understanding, forgiveness, patience, affection, acceptance? Who do *you* love? Take a moment to evaluate what you give. If it's not costly, make a commitment—and follow through—to love others in a way that costs you dearly—even when it hurts!

<sup>1</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, Romans 12:3 from *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*, © 2002.

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