

# 2:42LifeGroups

GROWING TOGETHER IN THE GOSPEL

## Life Group Study Guide

### Mind the Difference

#### Introduction and Review

Recall that since Chapter 5, Paul has been giving assurances to believers in Christ. Now in Chapter 8, we arrive at the ultimate assurance: we have the Holy Spirit who grants us new life, guarantees our adoption, and gives us hope for future glory. Note how this bears out in the following outline of Romans 8.

- 8:1-13        The Spirit grants us new life
- 8:14-17     The Spirit guarantees our adoption
- 8:18-30     The Spirit gives hope for future glory
- 8:31-39     A celebration of our assurance

Here's what we learned last time. Paul has declared that "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1). But how is this "no condemnation" possible?

Here Paul begins to "open the hood" and show us the engine—the inner workings of how we are free from condemnation. Even though the law failed to achieve righteousness in our lives (7:8-12), God succeeded by sending Jesus to be the sacrifice for our sin, taking the condemnation we deserved (8:3). This has brought about a radical change in our lives. Instead of trying (and failing) to obey the law by our own effort, we have the Spirit's power, with the result that "the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (8:4; see 7:6). *That's why there's no condemnation for us who are in Christ Jesus!*

But this raises a further question. What's the big difference between people who are "in the flesh" and people who are "in the Spirit"—a difference so huge that one group is free from condemnation, and the other group still chained to "sin and death" (8:2)? To answer that question, Paul zooms right into the *minds* of these people. The difference, he says, is in the way they *think*, that is, in their *mindset*. So in verses 5-7, Paul exposes the differences between these two mindsets. They differ in . . .

- 8:5     **Focus:** the things of the flesh versus the things of the Spirit
- 8:6     **Outcome:** death versus life and peace
- 8:7     **Behavior:** hostility toward God versus obedience to God

## Discussion

1. Notice that Paul is not exhorting us to “be in the Spirit,” nor even to *have* the mind of the Spirit. He is merely *stating* a fact about those who are in the Spirit. We find many other such statements throughout the New Testament. For example, see Romans 1:7; 6:3-4, 17-18, 22; 7:4; 8:37; 15:14; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16ff; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 3:1-3.

Why is it helpful to remember *who we are* as Christians? How does this comfort us, encourage us, or convict us?

2. The focus of the passage (Romans 8:5-7) is that people who “live in the Spirit” fix their minds on the things of the Spirit. The “things of the Spirit” are the things that belong to the coming eternal age, of which the Spirit is our guarantee (see 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; Ephesians 1:13).

To have the mindset of the Spirit does not mean that we will think only about spiritual topics, but that we will think about *every* topic from a spiritual perspective.

Choose three or more of the following topics, and consider what it would mean to think about them from an *eternal* perspective, applying values that last, not just for this present time, but for eternity:

education • entertainment (sports, video games, TV) • marriage • parenting • friendships • physical fitness • dieting • social media • money and investments • career • sickness • death

3. Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-4. Even though the people to whom Paul wrote were true believers, they had lapsed into fleshly behavior. According to 3:3-4, what specific actions revealed that they were behaving in a fleshly way? What does this teach us about the difference between thinking about “things of the Spirit” versus “things of the flesh.”
4. Even though as Christians we are “in the Spirit,” we sometimes lapse into setting our minds on the “things of the flesh”—that is, letting our values, perspective, and priorities be shaped by things that won’t last (see 1 Corinthians 3:1-4). What things in our culture tend to shape our thinking, encouraging us to focus on “things of the flesh” (temporal values and priorities) instead of “things of the Spirit.”
5. What are some important ways for us to *grow* in setting our minds on the things of the Spirit?