



## **Lesson 7 - The Spirit Conspiracy**

Our lesson speaks about 8 different circles – circles of influence we have in our lives; circles where the Spirit wants us to touch and bless those within these circles.



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### **1. The Circle of Family:**

Let's start with your family. Nobody is in a better position to wound and harm your family than you and nobody better to love and enhance your family to thrive than you. The Spirit wants to conspire with you in making their lives rich, full, free, good and fruitful.

When Jesus wanted to confront religious hypocrisy in His day, He pointed out the way hypocrites served their religion at the

expenses of their families. Paul picked up this theme in his letters to the churches.

**Read: Ephesians 5:21-6:9.**

Some may consider Paul's writings to be chauvinistic by today's standards but they were progressive by the standards of his time, because they promoted mutual responsibility, not merely top-down privilege. Similarly he told children to obey and honour their parents and for parents to nurture their children.

Paul moved from the circle of family to the circle of work. In his day, slavery was a social norm. Where he had the opportunity he urged slave owners to release their slaves and accept them as equal. Where that couldn't be done he urged them to treat their slaves with kindness – to mirror the kindness of God.

**2. The Circle of Work:**

**Read: James 5:1-6**

James took Paul's concern for a Spirit-led ethic to the level of business management and economic policy. In the Spirit they should work for and with God and do whatever was required, giving their best.

**What can change our economic behaviour?**

By asking new questions, such as: "What would God consider fair and generous to pay this person?"

How could our business and economic systems and policies become less harmful and more beneficial to aliveness on planet Earth – for us and for future generations.

Could we measure success not by how much we consume and how fast we consume it, but by how well we live, care and serve?

Just imagine how the business world would change if more and more of us went to work conspiring goodness in the Spirit.

### **3. The Circle of our Neighbourhood**

**Read: Hebrews 13:1-8**

The Spirit activates our concern for people in our neighbourhoods, including strangers we meet on the street – whatever their race, class, religion, political party or gender identity. They too are our neighbours and the Spirit will constantly awaken us to opportunities to serve and care.

***As Jesus said: “As you have done for the least of these, you have done for Me”***

### **4. The Circle of Forgotten people**

There are vulnerable people in our community who would normally be forgotten. According to James, our religion is nothing but hot air if we don't translate our faith into action regarding the vulnerable and easily forgotten around us.

So the Spirit invites us to conspire for the well-being of orphans, widows, undocumented aliens, refugees, prisoners, people with special needs, the sick, the poor, the homeless, the uneducated, the unskilled, the unemployed and the underpaid.

### **5. The Circle of Civic and Community life.**

We are told in the New Testament to pray for and show due respect for our political leaders. We are told to avoid debt – except the perpetual debt of love that we owe every human being. In today's world, that means everyone on the planet, because as never before our world is bound together in one global ecology, economy and military-industrial complex.

To be in tune with the Spirit is to transcend all smaller boundaries and to conspire in terms of the planetary whole.

### **6. The Circle of our critics, opponents and enemies.**

These are the people who annoy us and those we annoy; the people who don't understand us and those we don't understand; the people who try our patience and those whose patience we try.

Rather than write them off as unimportant and unwanted, we need to rediscover them as some of the most important people we know. If we ignore them, our growth in the Spirit will be stunted. If we let the Spirit guide us in what we say to their faces and behind their backs, we will become more Christ-like.

### **7. The circle of our community of faith.**

This is our learning circle that forms whenever we encourage each other to let the Spirit keep flowing and moving in one another's lives. It is important to keep showing up and to show up with a good attitude.

It is especially important to be a channel of blessing to those who lead in your community of faith...being sure they don't have to worry about money and being sure they feel truly appreciated. Their work is so important and surprisingly hard. Your encouragement could make the difference in whether they give up or keep giving their best.

**Read: Ephesians 5:15-20**

### **8. Our last and largest circle – the circle of all that extends beyond humans.**

This circle includes all living things and the physical structures on which we all depend – air, rain, soil, wind, climate. You can't claim to love your neighbour and pollute the environment on which they depend. You can't claim to love the Creator and abuse the climate of this beautiful, beloved plant. The Spirit that moves among us is the same Spirit that moves in and through all creation.

If we are attuned to the Spirit, we will see all creatures as our companion; even as our relatives in the family of God, for in the Spirit we are all related.

### **Engage:**

What one thought or idea from today's 2 part lesson especially intrigued, provoked, disturbed, challenged or encouraged you?

Can you recall a time when you felt the Spirit guiding you to go above and beyond your normal way of responding to a situation?

What do you think about the idea that our words are a rudder that steers our lives?

### **Activate:**

Choose one of the circles from this lesson and make it your focus in the week ahead.

### **Meditate:**

In your imagination, walk through a typical day, from waking up to going to bed at night. Imagine yourself as a portal of blessing in each circle of influence. Simply pray: Let it be so.