

KEEP IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:25 “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

Scripture reminds us that the fruit of the Spirit is formed not by our level of obedience to a certain set of rules but rather by our level of submission to the person who is dwelling within us. Cultivating fruit is not the work of “doing” but the work of “abiding” - abiding in the true vine, which is the Lord Jesus Christ (John 15:4). The more we abide, the more we cultivate.

The purpose of cultivating a fruitful life is so that we can be transformed into the image of Christ. And this transformation only happens by the work of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). This is the reason why the Apostle Paul was sure to remind us in our text that if we live by the Spirit, we must also ‘keep in step with the Spirit’ (Gal. 5:25).

Keeping in step with the Spirit is the key to cultivating and maintaining a fruitful life. And doing so is truthfully a matter of discipline. It requires us to discipline ourselves to say “no” to the wrong things and “yes” to the right things.

Paul explains this concept more in the verse before: “those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:24). Essentially, those who claim to be Christians must die to their old sinful nature. Why? Because Christ has now taken up residence in their bodies and has given them new life. Following salvation, Christians are ushered into a new way of living. Crucifying the flesh means we *choose* to say “no” to sin and all that is unholy.

Take some time to think about what that might look like for you. Christopher Wright suggests we need to make a practice of telling our flesh “no.” We need to make it clear to ourselves that:

- There are places I should not go.
- There are things I should not look at.
- There are relationships I should not play with.
- There are words that I should not allow to pass my lips.
- There are conversations I should not join in or pass on.
- There are desires I should not give into.¹

Disciplining ourselves to say “no” to sin has a purpose (and it’s not to make us miserable!) In fact, it’s just the opposite. Saying “no” to sin allows us to live in true freedom and fulfillment. We actively put to death our sinful nature *so that* we can live as the new creations Christ has made us to be. We say “no” to what is unholy, so we can say “yes” to what is holy. We *choose* Christ over ourselves and *choose* to live in obedience to his Word.

¹ Christopher J.H. Wright, *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit: Growing in Christlikeness*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017) 157.

Choosing to say “yes” to the Spirit brings out of darkness and into God’s marvelous light! So may we be a people eager to read and study the Word of God. May we be a people willing to obey his commands and trust his promises. May we be a people who develop a consistent prayer life and actively communicate with our Maker. May we be a people who orient the rest of our lives around the righteousness of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

I will leave you with the short excerpt from *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action*. I would encourage you to reflect on your personal commitment to God and his Word. Consider how you can live more fully into the transforming work of the Holy Spirit that enables you to participate in the set apart life to which you have been called. Let’s recommit ourselves to the gospel and bear witness to our King!

“We confess that we easily claim to love the Bible without loving the life it teaches - the life of costly practical obedience to God through Christ. Yet ‘nothing commends the gospel more eloquently than a transformed life, and nothing brings it into disrepute so much as personal inconsistency. We are charged to behave in a manner that is worthy of the gospel of Christ and even to ‘adorn’ it, enhancing its beauty by holy lives.’ For the sake of the gospel of Christ, therefore, we recommit ourselves to prove our love for God’s Word by believing and obeying it. There is no biblical mission without biblical living.”²

² *The life the Bible requires: The Cape Town Commitment*, © 2011 The Lausanne Movement, 1.6.D.