

Walking by the Spirit

'New Beginning Studies' #3 of 4 (UPDATED 9-12-17)

Read Gal. 5:16-25

- ¹⁶ "So I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.**
- ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that **you are not to do whatever you want.**
- ¹⁸ But **if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.**
- ¹⁹ **The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;**
- ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that **those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**
- ²² But **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control.** Against such things there is no law.
- ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
- ²⁵ **Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.**" (NIV)

What we have in these verses, are three images of the Spirit's work in our life:

1. "Walking by the Spirit" in [verse 16](#),
2. Being "led by the Spirit" in [verse 18](#),
3. Bearing "the fruit of the Spirit" in [verse 22](#).

Q: What does Paul mean when he tells us to "walk by the Spirit"?

- To "Walk by the Spirit" means to do what you do each day by the Spirit—Live your life in all its details, from waking up in the morning until going to sleep at night, by the enabling power of the Spirit.
 - To please God and do your part, you will have to learn how to live/walk in a new way—by the Spirit ([Romans 8:5-8](#)).
- Walking by the Spirit is what we do when the desires produced by the Spirit are stronger than the desires produced by the flesh.
 - This means that "walking by the Spirit" is not something we do in order to get the Spirit's help, but rather, it's something we do **because** of the Spirit's help.
- "Walking by the Spirit" is something the Holy Spirit enables us to do by producing in us strong desires that align with God's will... which is what God said He would do.
 - [Ezekiel 36:26-27](#) "I will **give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.**
 - ²⁷ **And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.**" (NIV)
- Now that you have been redeemed, "you are not to do whatever you want" ([vs. 17](#)). You are not your own anymore, so God requires you to honor Him with your body ([1Cor. 6:19](#)).

Q: In [verse 16](#), Paul told us to “**walk by the Spirit**”. But in [verse 18](#), he says, “...*if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*” Is there a difference between “walking by the Spirit” and being “led by the Spirit”?

- “Walking by the Spirit” and being “led by the Spirit” refer to the same thing; but there is a difference:
 - “Being led by the Spirit” stresses what the Spirit does.
 - “Walking by the Spirit” stresses how our behavior changes because of what the Spirit does.
- The Spirit leads us by creating desires to obey God.
- We walk by the Spirit when we put those desires into action.

Q: What does Paul mean when he says, “...*if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law*”?

- If you are led by the Spirit (led by Him to obey the law), then you don’t need the law to tell you what to do.
- [Rom. 8:1-4](#) “Therefore, there is now **no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**,² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has **set you free from the law of sin and death**.³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, **God did by sending his own Son** in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ in order that **the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**” (NIV)
 - When you walk by the Spirit, you fulfill the basic requirement of the law, so you are not under its condemnation.
 - When you walk by the Spirit, you don’t feel the pinch or burden of the law demanding you do something you have no desire to do.
- When the Spirit is leading us by producing godly desires, then the commands of God are not a burden, but a joy. So walking by the Spirit frees us from being under the law. ([2 Corinthians 3:17](#)).

But what does all this mean... practically speaking? How do we “walk by the Spirit”?

In [verses 19-24](#), Paul gives us some practical “how to’s” by contrasting “acts of the flesh” with “fruit of the Spirit”.

The opposite of doing the “works of the flesh”, is bearing the “fruit of the Spirit”.

- This is exactly the same contrast we saw in [verse 16](#): “walk by the Spirit, and you **will not gratify the desires of the flesh.**”

The “works of the flesh” are what you do when you “gratify the desires of the flesh”.

The “fruit of the Spirit” is what appears in your life when you “walk by the Spirit”.

Q: Why does Paul refer to the “fruit of the Spirit”, instead of the “works of the Spirit”, as being the opposite of “works of the flesh”?

- What the Spirit produces is not **our work**; it is **His fruit!**
- What we do, when we “walk by the Spirit”, is simply fulfill the desires produced by the Spirit.

Q: What does Paul mean when He says, “*The acts of the flesh are obvious*” in [verse 19](#)?

- He means everybody can see it.
- These are the things that just naturally happen when you “*gratify the desires of the flesh*”, whether you want them to or not!
- Take some time to look at the list of definitions at the bottom of this study, and you will see what Paul is talking about!

Q: What is the big difference you see between the “*acts of the flesh*” and the “*fruit of the Spirit*”?

- “*Acts of the flesh*” are about **me and what I want**; but “*fruit of the Spirit*” is about **how I treat others**, which is what God wants!

Q: The first “*fruit of the Spirit*” Paul mentions is love. Is this significant?

- Yes!!! Love is the all-encompassing lifestyle of one who is led by the Spirit, walks by the Spirit, and bears the fruit of the Spirit.
 - [Gal. 5:14](#) *For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”* (NIV)
 - Loving your neighbor and being led by the Spirit/walking by the Spirit, are almost synonymous!
- **In every situation, the right thing to do is the loving thing!**

[Read John 6:63](#)

“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life.” (NIV)

Q: If we are going to learn how to walk by the Spirit, we are going to have to learn to listen to Him, and know what He thinks and what He wants. According to Jesus, where will we hear the Spirit and find this life?

- In Jesus’ words.

Q: Where are Jesus’ words found?

- In the Bible.

[Read 2Tim. 3:16-17](#)

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (NIV)

Q: What does it mean that all scripture is “*God-breathed*”?

- It means it was given by the inspiration of God ([2Peter 1:20-21](#)), so it is literally God’s way of talking to us and teaching us.

[Read 2Tim. 2:15](#)

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (NIV)

Q: How can you learn to correctly handle the “word of truth”?

- [Acts 8:30-31](#) *“Then Philip ran up to the chariot and **heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet.** “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. ³¹ **“How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.**” (NIV)*
- By spending time reading and studying the Word of God.
 - The Eunuch in Acts 8 is a wonderful example for us in many ways.
 - When Philip found him, he was studying his Bible and looking for answers on his own.
- By learning from others.
 - The Eunuch was humble enough to let someone else help him understand what the Bible teaches.

What about you?

Q: Are you committed to “walking by the Spirit”, being “led by the Spirit”, and bearing the “fruit of the Spirit”?

Q: Are you serious about not gratifying the “desires of the flesh”?

Q: Are you willing to let someone else help you learn?

[Read Luke 13:6-9](#)

*Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and **he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any.** ⁷ So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. **Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’***

*⁸ “‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ **If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.**” (NIV)*

God is serious about you producing fruit, so you’d better be serious about it too! Jesus will work with you and give you everything you need to bear the fruit God is looking for; but God won’t let an unfruitful Christian use up His soil forever. Eventually, an unfruitful Christian will lose their access to God’s resources.

In our next study, we will look a little deeper into how we grow up together so we can do our part in helping God restore His creation and bring Heaven to Earth!



Acts of the Flesh and Their Definitions [Gal. 5:19-21](#):

Based on Original Greek / New Testament Meanings found in Strong's Greek Concordance and the United Bible Societies Translators' Handbooks.

The 1st Group: Acts Connected with Sex or Sensuality

Sexual Immorality: Original Greek word is “*porneia*” (*por-ni'-ah*), and it means having sex with someone other than your husband/wife.

- An example would be homosexuality, having sex before marriage, etc.

Impurity: Original Greek word is “*akatharsia*” (*ak-ath-ar-see'-ah*), and it means physical or moral uncleanness.

- An example would be pornography, phone sex, sexting, etc.

Debauchery: Original Greek word is “*aselgeia*” (*as-elg'-i-a*), and it means being sexually unrestrained, or going beyond customary or proper bounds or limits; disregarding rules.

- This isn't just immorality, it's immorality gone wild; immorality gone public.
- An example would be having sex in public.

The 2nd Group: Things Associated with Pagan Worship

Idolatry: Original Greek word is “*eidololatreia*” (*i-do-lol-at-ri'-ah*), and it means image-worship (literally or figuratively):

- This could be anything you place above God. (This would be a form of idolatry.)
- This could include people, jobs, sports, recreation, etc.

Witchcraft: Original Greek word is “*pharmakeia*” (*far-mak-i'-ah*), and it means the use of drugs for magical purposes.

- Some examples would be using drugs for sorcery, magic, casting spells, or as a part of worship.

The 3rd Group: Acts of Social Evil

(Except for Discord and Jealousy, all of these are plural in Greek, stressing numerous and repeated occurrences.)

Hatred: Original Greek word is “*echthra*” (*ekh'-thrah*), and it means hostility or unneighborly acts of any kind or form.

- An example would be wishing someone harm, or harming them.

Discord: Original Greek word is “*eris*” (*er'-is*), and it means a quarrel, contention, debate, strife, variance.

- An example would be having a bad attitude, the opposite of harmony, or being hard to get along with.

Jealousy: Original Greek word is “*zelos*” (*dzay'-los*), and it literally means “*heat*.” When it is used figuratively and in a positive sense, it means “*zeal*.” When it is used in an unfavorable sense (like Paul uses in this passage), it means being angry or resentful toward someone for something they possess that you do not.

- This is more than a lover's attitude toward his or her rivals... it's the eager desire to have or obtain what belongs to someone else.

Fits of rage: Original Greek word is “*thumos*” (*thoo-mos*), and it sometimes means passion, but here it is used in the sense of “wrath.” This isn’t just a characteristic of personality like having a bad temper. This is an act in which anger is expressed.

- Some examples would be outbursts of anger, losing your temper, yelling and/or cursing at someone, saying things intended to hurt them.

Selfish ambition: Original Greek word is “*eritheia*” (*er-ith-i’-ah*), and it means pushing one’s self ahead regardless of what happens to others, or working zealously for one’s own interests.

- Some examples would be always thinking about yourself, putting others down and/or promoting yourself over others.

Dissent: Original Greek word is “*dichostsis*” (*dee-khos-tas-ee’-ah*), and it means disunion, division, sedition... separating into parties or groups.

- Some examples would be thinking that your group is better than everyone else’s, or refusing to get along or associate with people from a different group.

Factions: Original Greek word is “*hairesis*” (*hah’-ee-res-is*). When it is used specifically it means choosing a specific party over others. When it is used abstractly it means disunion, heresy, or sect.

- Some examples would be groups that are cliquish or want to keep groups separate from each other, or a group that causes trouble or refuses to get along with other groups.

Envy: Original Greek word is “*phthonos*” (*fthon’-os*), and it means ill-will, jealousy, spite.

- Some examples would be: Being mad when something good happens to someone else, being resentful, always wanting something more, and never being satisfied.

The 4th Group: Acts Lacking Self Control

Drunkenness: Original Greek word is “*methe*” (*meth’-ay*), and it means intoxication, which often results in other sinful behaviors.

- An example would be getting high from alcohol, drugs, or other intoxicants, and acting in any number of the ways listed above.

Orgies: Original Greek word is “*komos*” (*ko’-mos*), and it means carousing, which is a word to describe excessive feasting and group sex that accompanied pagan worship services.

- A modern-day example would be a party where members engage in sex with multiple partners either individually or at the same time.

And the like: This indicates that Paul’s list is by no means exhaustive, but that the Galatians will be able to recognize other “acts of the flesh” in addition to what Paul has mentioned.

Gal. 5:21 “I warn you, as I did before, that **those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**” (NIV)