

Spirit Led

There is a pastor in NYC, who talks about having one of his ministry mentors come visit his church. And during his mentor's visit, if you can imagine, the self imposed pressure the pastor had to be feeling felt real. But through all adversity, this pastor felt like he preached a lights out sermon, the music was awesome, people were responding with hands in the air right, everyone seemed engaged. The gathering, he felt, exceeded all expectations. So after the gathering, the pastor, ever eager to talk to his mentor over dinner, got to dinner and he leaned in and the first thing he said was "What did you think?" He was pretty hyped on himself. And his mentor, in a fatherly way, said back "the gathering had such great content, but so little power." The pastor was well versed in the scriptures. He knew his Bible inside and out and I would imagine, to some degree, that was distilled down to his church; to his congregation. We often say around here that you reproduce who you are and so I would imagine others in his church were saturated in the Bible as well. The content was so great, but something was lacking. Something was missing. Now, the mentor mentioned that "power" was missing. And I would argue the power he spoke about was the Holy Spirit.

My name is Marcus Williamson and I'm one of the pastors here at City Church. If you have your bibles with you go ahead and turn with me to [Galatians 5:16](#). And yes we are FINALLY, finally, out of Matthew. All it took was getting Kent off the stage to make it happen. You're welcome. We are in week 2 of our newest series Future Church where we have laid out 4 areas of focus for our church family for the next four years. In case you missed it last week or need a reminder, as a church we are working toward being [Bible-saturated, Spirit-led, discipleship driven, and outward oriented](#). Last week Kent talked about us being Bible-saturated and this week I have the honor of talking to us about being Spirit-led as a church family. So by 2028, we want every member of City Church to have: an [intimate, bold, and obedient relationship with the Spirit](#). This in part is the process to having the power that the mentor spoke about earlier in the story. When you have an intimate, bold, and obedient relationship with the Spirit you allow his power to impact your life.

Let's break each one down: So we want to have an [intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit](#). We want knowledge of who He is from the scriptures, but more importantly we want to *know* Him for ourselves. We want each of you to have a *closeness* with the Spirit of God. We also want each of you to have a [bold relationship with the Holy Spirit](#). We want you to feel *confident* in your hearing of the Holy Spirit. That you are so close and near to the Spirit of God that you are bold in knowing what he is saying to you as a result. And lastly, we want each of us to have an [obedient relationship with the Holy](#)

Spirit. As we listen to what the Spirit has to say, we want to obey what he says so that we can be transformed to look more like Jesus.¹ This is all part of what it means to be Spirit-led. And as you become Spirit-led, we become Spirit-led. See how that works?

Now, *being Spirit-led doesn't happen overnight* because intimacy takes work. **If you have a best friend you know this to be true. Knowing their routines, why they like certain things, who they are, how to be a good friend to them takes time. If you have a spouse you know this to be true as well. To know someone deeply takes work. It takes time. It takes a whole lot of listening and being quiet.** I would argue it's similar with the Holy Spirit. So because it takes time, here's how I want us to frame this sermon. I want us to treat today as a *Holy Spirit 101* sermon. This is sort of an appetizer. A primer if you will. Because in order for us to truly be Spirit-led it will take more than just today to get there.

So with that being said, this summer we will be teaching 10 weeks on the Holy Spirit. We'll talk about God's power, presence, and what it means to hear his voice. We'll talk about the gifts of the Spirit, prophecy, tongues, healing, and worship. Our goal is that this summer will be Holy Spirit 201, 301, you get the picture. We want to be able to answer all of your pertinent questions, to unweird any unnecessary weirdness, to demystify some of the harder pieces to understand, and really just help us navigate and understand the Holy Spirit better. So there's a high chance we will not answer all of your questions on the Holy Spirit today, but the hope is that we will do so later.

Now, for our time today, what I want to do for us is to zoom out a little and look at how Galatians can help us to start the conversation on being Spirit-led in our lives. Are you ready? **Verse 16.**

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Real quick: That word *walk* in the Greek is this ***peripateo* [can you say *peripateo*?]**. So when Paul says to *peripateo*, what he is saying is to *orient our life around the Spirit daily*. Put a pin in that because we'll come back to that phrase a couple times. For now, let's keep reading.

For the flesh [Paul says] 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. But if you are led by the Spirit [there's our phrase], you are not under the law. The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition,

¹[2 Cor. 3:18](#)

dissensions, factions 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.

Alright. So first, Paul is starting off by contrasting “walking by the Spirit” by what he calls walking by the “flesh.” The evidence of walking by the flesh, he says, is obvious. If you were around back in January during our Formation² series, we did a whole week talking about this passage and the flesh specifically. Feel free to reference that teaching if you want to know more.

But here, Paul is simply saying that it is evident, by some combination of this list, *and the like*, of things in our life, when we aren’t walking by the Spirit. And that people who live like that won’t inherit the kingdom of God. Now, don’t overlook that statement. For some of us, quite a few of the things on that list are very evident in our lives on a regular basis. And we don’t even see it as much of a problem. We certainly don’t see how much of a barrier it is to life in the Spirit. But look at [verse 22](#):

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and *self-control*. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

So the counter to the desires of the flesh is the fruit of the Spirit. Or the things the Spirit desires for your life. And really, if you polled Christians and non-Christians alike I believe we would all say, we could all stand to have a little more love in our lives right? A little more joy. I’m sure we’d all love some peace in the midst of any chaos in our lives. Anyone else want some self control? To be able to resist the flesh? This is what the fruit of the Spirit gives us. The ability to resist the flesh. So the question is how do we make a conscious effort to have the fruit of the Spirit right? If we desire any and all of it, how do we get it? Well [verse 25](#) will give us our answer.

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

So before this we read that Christ has made it possible for us to crucify the passions and desires of our flesh and here the follow up is that the way we do this is by living by the Spirit. By *keeping in step* with the Spirit. Now that phrase “*keep in step*” is *less about pace and more about rhythm*. There should be a synchronization between you and the Spirit. Notice, it does not say, let us *keep up* with the Spirit. The Spirit is not out here in front waiting for you to finally catch up. Nor are you supposed to be racing *ahead* of the Spirit. The idea here is that you are walking closely by him, keeping in step with him.

² [Formation Series](#)

Think of it this way, when you are walking with a friend and talking to them, are y'all at an odd pace with one another? Are you multiple steps away from each other? No. That would not be beneficial to your conversation. You'd be trying to listen but not really and also they probably couldn't hear what you said either. It would be altogether awkward and clunky at best. If you are walking with your friend, the only way to have a meaningful conversation is to walk alongside them. You have to have a similar walking pattern. You have to *keep in step with one another*. That's where we want to be with the Spirit. To be in step with the Holy Spirit. And I think you will see that walking in step with the Spirit, *orienting your daily life* around Him, will make the fruit of the Spirit more evident in your life and the desires of the flesh less evident.

And this syncs us up to what we are wanting as a church – to be Spirit-led. We are all being disciplined by something. We talked about this in the last week of Matthew, but I want you to see how this applies here. We are all being influenced by our flesh more than we realize. And the things we look at, entertain ourselves with, etc. can strengthen our flesh which naturally opposes the Spirit. You cannot escape being formed; shaped into something. **Justin Whitmel Early** who wrote the book "Habits of the Household" says it this way: "**The normal is what shapes us the most, though we notice it the least.**" What happens in your daily life matters. Your routines matter. It is shaping you. And I would argue that when you are not sensitive to the Spirit in your day to day, normal life, when you are not listening to him, then it gives opportunity for your disposition in the flesh to take over and thus for you to be contrary to what the Spirit wants to do in your life.

Think of it like this, this is like a Matrix moment for many of us in the room. Based on our scripture for today, there seems to be two options. You have a choice here. You can either keep living the way you are, following after the desires of the flesh. Continuing routines that don't really include any orientation around the Spirit. Or you can choose to start *keeping in step* the Spirit and in the process crucify the desires of the flesh that are evident as Paul mentioned. Now hear me say, the flesh won't go down that easily, because it would want nothing more than for you to leave here today with no power from the Spirit. It would want nothing more than for you to leave here today and return back to how it has always been. It wants you to have the same routines as you did last week. It wants you to have the same patterns of life as you did a month ago. The flesh wants to keep things status quo. It doesn't want you to have joy, peace, kindness, or self-control. It doesn't want this for your life. For your family. For the people around you. But the Spirit, come on somebody, the Spirit on the other hand wants to grab ahold of you. To shake you out of your routine. To shake you out of your patterns you've made, for the glory of God. It wants you to fight the flesh and its desires. It wants you to follow after

Jesus, not just in how you speak but in action³. But none of this, listen, is possible if we are not actively trying to *keep in step* with the Spirit. You will not be able to have true joy, true peace, or the ability to have self-control over your impulses if you are not trying to walk alongside the Spirit. So how? How do we exactly keep in step with the Spirit?

Well part of being Spirit-led, or keeping in step with the Spirit, means we must be *sensitive to the Holy Spirit by making space for him in our daily lives*. This is the 101 part. It all starts here. It's hard to be Spirit-led if we are not aware that the Spirit is in us as followers of Jesus. That's part of what it means to be sensitive to Him. And I'm not just talking about intellectually knowing he lives in you. I'm talking about what Paul meant a moment ago when he said: "...since we already *live by the Spirit...*" He's assuming we already know Him. Like know Him, know Him right. There is an acknowledgement there, a sense of truly knowing the Spirit is in us that we must grasp before we can keep in step with the Spirit. And I think the way we do this is by orienting our lives around the Spirit.

This is where the work begins right? Because hear me say, I get it, we all live busy lives here. We are never not moving, planning, working, thinking. We fill our schedules to the brim to the point where we don't have the capacity to think about anything outside of the next thing coming up. We are worried daily about many things. And for some of us the problem is not that we're filling our schedules with bad things, it might be all "good" things. But what I want you to hear is that when we fill our schedules and our minds to the brim, this leaves no space left for the Spirit. Writer **Corrie Ten Boom** once said that "**the devil can't make you sin, he'll make you busy.**" Just like sin, busyness cuts off your connection to God.

There's a story in the gospels where Jesus visits the home of Mary and Martha. In the story, Martha busies herself with preparations. Luke⁴ actually writes that she is "distracted" by many things while her sister, Mary, is sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to Him. Martha comes over and asks Jesus to tell Mary to start helping her. Martha's upset she's doing all the work herself. But you know what Jesus says? He says, "**Martha, Martha...you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.**" Pay attention to that word "**chosen**" there. Mary has *chosen* what is better. That word is very active. Instead of being worried about everything around her, Mary saw Jesus as her focus. For us, I want us to get to a point where the Spirit starts becoming more of a focus in our lives. I want us to *choose* to make space for the Spirit in our lives. So what could this look like in your own life?

³ [James 1:22–25](#)

⁴ [Luke 10:40–42](#)

Well for some of us, on our drive to and from work, maybe we can turn off our music and podcasts and ask the Spirit if he's got anything to say to us that particular morning. And yes, the first couple times you do this there's a chance it could be weird for you. But this is how you start the process. By doing the thing. If you're a college student, maybe for you it looks like praying to the Spirit when you walk to and from class. Maybe you take out the airpods and leave your phone in your pocket to be able to focus on what he might say. Here's another one, on your walk to that stressful meeting, or interaction with a friend you don't feel like you're prepared for, instead of repeating how the conversation will go in your head, ask the Spirit to help you. To give you peace like [Phillipians 4](#)⁵ says. Instead of making space for the flesh, you are making space for the Spirit. Before you close your eyes at night, maybe get your phone further away from you, just out of arms' reach. Instead of mindlessly scrolling, you could thank the Spirit for the day and even lay any anxiousness that has lingered. In all of this, you are making space for the Spirit.

If you live with others-- roommates, a spouse, family, they should be included in this section of making space for the Spirit. You are linked in such a way where what you do impacts them and vice versa. So how do you make space so your entire household is sensitive to the Spirit? If you have a roommate and you both follow Jesus, maybe it looks like putting short Bible verses on post-it notes up on your bathroom mirror or on the fridge. Verses like [Be still and know that I am God](#)⁶. It's a short and sweet reminder for you to pause and remember the Spirit is with you. Maybe it looks like you and your roommates holding each other accountable to get up early to be able to have built in time to make space for the Spirit. If you're married, maybe it looks like you and spouse getting up early to pray together before you both start your respective daily routines. ["Spirit gives us an awareness of and connection to You as we go through our day today."](#) It doesn't have to be long, just a habit that puts your focus and attention on the Spirit as you get your day started. If you are married with kids in the house, maybe it looks like alternating your time getting ready in the mornings - one of you attends to the kids and their needs while the other has some more extended time to be quiet and sensitive to the Spirit. [Here's something new we've been trying in the Williamson household, that book Habits of the Household I mentioned earlier, talks about making space by doing a sending prayer each morning with everyone in your house. Here's the way it works: basically someone says a chunk of the prayer and everyone repeats it. My son, Z, who's 3, has learned it and actually leads our family in the prayer some mornings. And hear me say, he had it memorized before me so he might be an anomaly but I would love to lead it for you if you don't mind. Just repeat each phrase after I say it. Ready? Father, Son,](#)

⁵ [Phillipians 4:6-7](#)

⁶ [Psalm 46:10](#)

and Holy Spirit. Thank you for this day. Bless us as we work, study, and play. Be present with us in all we do. May we bring glory and honor to you. Amen. Amen.

This, along with other ways, might feel overly simple and small, but the key here is consistency. That is what we are going for. Whatever you do, no matter how simple or ordinary. Do it consistently. Everyday. Because **the normal is what shapes us the most, though we notice it the least.** *This*, along with other ways, is how you *orient yourself around the Spirit*. This is how you create sensitivity. This is how you make space. Now, not only do we want to make space for us and ours, but we want to do so for the people around us. We don't want to fall into the American individualism trap where we think the Spirit's power and presence was meant only for us and ours. We also want to be sensitive to what he can do through us for the sake of others.

That means if you are in Lifegroup, one of the best ways to love your group well is to be praying for your group. That the Spirit would help enter into your space. Because here's what I want you to think about for a second. Our LifeGroups currently have about 20+ people attending regularly. That's 20+ people who are coming from work, some with kids, others who might have had a hard day, others who wish the day would end, still others who are coming directly from work and have not eaten yet. These are people coming in with various perspectives from the day. So who do you think has the power to help each of you to have ears to hear what the scriptures have to say? Who can give you strength to focus on the things of God after what everyone has already been through that day? The Holy Spirit. So on your drive to LifeGroup, or if people meet at your house, you can be praying for an awareness of the Spirit's presence during your group time. Maybe you're a leader, and it looks like beginning LifeGroup in silence for a minute or two, allowing space for everyone to listen to the Spirit before you dive into discussion questions. This along with other things can be how you start making space for the Spirit in your LifeGroup. Again, small and ordinary, but not insignificant.

Now, as we are sensitive to the Spirit when it comes to LifeGroup, let us also be sensitive to the Spirit when it comes to the people we interact with who don't know Jesus yet. Maybe it's a coworker or coworkers you regularly come into contact with. Maybe it's a family member. Or someone that you go to school with. Maybe it's someone that has similar hobbies as you outside of work. There should be dedicated space everyday where we have time to be sensitive to what the Spirit might want to do through us for the sake of our coworkers, classmates, or friends. The people we see regularly. So let us pray for eyes to see the people that need Jesus, as well as ears to hear those who are hurting and need healing through Jesus.

Pray His power would rest on you. That *when* He leads you to speak, you would speak, whether it's just a regular water cooler conversation or maybe it's something more intentional than that. And then pray when you're finished talking to them that something you said cuts to the heart. And then they would decide to seek the Lord afterwards. The power of the Spirit can accomplish this through you. In all of this, let's remember that we all need to orient our lives around the Spirit in order to be Spirit-led.

So as we close, I have a question for us: **do you want to be Spirit-led?** Do you want to be someone who your coworkers refer to as having a joy about you? Do you want to be the person who, when everything is seemingly going wrong at school or at work, when others might be freaking out, that you remain calm? That there is this peace that grounds you and allows others to feel your peace because of it? Do you want to be someone that doesn't give in so regularly to past sins, maybe to generational sins, but is able to be more self controlled?⁷ Do you want to die to selfish ambition and be someone who prefers others over yourself? In a world that is so self driven, so me, myself, and I, dying to self can be extremely hard, but with the Spirit's help it can be possible.

We want this for you and for our church. To be Spirit-led. So as we get ready for communion, here's what I want us to try. I want us to make space for the Spirit now. You knew this was coming right? I know, it might feel a little weird, it might seem a little awkward but what better place than here. What better place than now.

Some of you need to interact with the Spirit for the first time. Let's do that today. Maybe you don't know what to say, that's ok, you don't need to say much of anything. You can simply say, "**Spirit help me to hear you. Help me to listen.**" Some of you need to reconnect and apologize for ignoring his voice in your life. Maybe you've heard from Him in your own spirit and dismissed His voice. Maybe you've heard from Him through others and you dismissed that too. This is the moment to apologize and ask for forgiveness in this. And then to repent and listen to His voice by acting on what He calls you to do. We'll talk soon about all of these things, but for now our call to you is this: make space for the Spirit of God to come and to speak, in any way that He wants to.

For others you need power over something right now. You need power over some type of sin that has a stranglehold over your life. You've tried medicine, you've tried numbing and distraction via television, reading books, maybe even reading the Bible, and maybe it's helped some but it's not killing it. You see it as clear as day, and your flesh wants whatever that is so desperately. Right now, you need to ask the Spirit to break through the noise and to help you by his power to break free from this particular sin. That he

⁷ [Romans 8:5](#)

would help you listen to what he wants you to do, whether that is to confess to LifeGroup for the first time, whether that is to talk to your counselor and be honest about where you are, whether that is talking to your roommates about sin patterns they don't necessarily see in you because it happens when they are not around, maybe it's talking about something you don't want to talk about to your spouse. Whatever that is, as you listen to the Spirit, maybe he's prompting you to act right now. Whatever this looks like for you, I want us to make space mentally and emotionally for the Holy Spirit to move. So let's do that now. We will have a couple minutes of silence so nothing distracts you. The band won't even come up yet, and you know what—I'm actually going to go sit down. My hope is that once you get over the initial "this is weird" that the Spirit is able to break through any noise left in your head. After a little while I'll come back up to pray.