

STAYIN' ALIVE

Walking With the Spirit Colossians 2:6-7

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Our worship series on “Staying Alive” continues today with “Walking With the Spirit.” Last week Pastor Jeff spoke about how the Holy Spirit is alive in us, like breath, fire and wind. Today we are going to spend time on what it is like to walk with the Holy Spirit.

The image of walking is everywhere in the scriptures. In Leviticus 26:12 God said, “And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people.” We walk with God and God walks with us. That is what we call walking with the Holy Spirit.

Walking sounds easy enough, but that is because most of us have been walking as long as we can remember. However, none of us began our journey on earth walking. When we were newborn, none of us walked. In fact, there were cheers when we would make ourselves roll over!!! There was an innate desire within each one of us to move. We had a desire for movement within us and that desire gradually translated into action. First there was “rolling over,” then crawling, then standing and taking a step or two, then walking and for some running! Today, without much thought we walk, jog, dance, run and jump.

Our scripture is found in Colossians 2:6, 7, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk with him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding with thanksgiving.”

Today we are going to explore walking with the Spirit. Let me give you a brief definition of what walking in the Spirit means. Walking in the Spirit means living into a relationship with God. It means to awaken and experience God’s love within ourselves, with God and with others.

Why walk with the Spirit?

How do I walk with the Spirit?

What difference does it make in my life?

Why do I walk in the Spirit? We walk with the Spirit because we were created to walk with God. We walk with the Spirit because God has placed the desire, that innate need to be connected to God through the Spirit. It is in each one of us.

The Spirit nudges us to keep moving with God.

It sounds so simple, walk with the Spirit. But walking with the Spirit can be a little like learning to walk as a toddler. We take a few steps, maybe fall down, a few times, get up and try again, and then trip, get up again, keep on going. Why does the toddler keep trying to walk after falling down so many times? There is something innate inside of a toddler that has a desire to walk. No one tells a baby to turn over or start walking, they just do it. And that same something innate inside of each one of us, creates that desire to walk with the Spirit. The Spirit is in each one of us. So why do we walk with the Spirit? Because God has placed that desire, that determination, much like the determination of the toddler to keep walking, so that we can grow and experience the life God has for us. A life of love. We experience the love of God by walking with the Spirit. That is why we walk with Spirit. To live into the love of God. Now, you may be thinking, “I don’t have this desire to walk with the Spirit, what is wrong with me?” One of the reasons we gather for worship is to be reminded that the Spirit is with us, walking with us, guiding us and when you question the Spirit in your life, you are being carried.

That leads us to the next question. How do we walk with the Spirit?

Many people get confused about what walking in the Spirit looks like. Walking with the Spirit is not about trying to do the right thing, or trying to be perfect. That is not walking in the Spirit. Walking with the Spirit is really about being in relationship with God. It is taking the time to be with the One who loves you. It is about being in a trusting relationship with God. We walk with the Spirit through relationship. And that relationship can have a similar feel to a deep, trusting relationship with a dear friend. Maybe like this:

I have a dear friend that lives out of town. We have decided that daily phone calls are important to our friendship. So we talk to each other at least once a day. We share all kinds of things with each other. We not only talk about our work and our families. We share our hurts, our joys and our fears and our prayers with each other. We talk, laugh, listen, and share our hearts. When we talk our attention is focused on the other to the exclusion of almost everything else.

Walking with Spirit is like that. When we enter into an intimate relationship with the Spirit, we share our hearts, our thoughts, our hopes, our dreams, our disappointments, our joys, our sorrows, our lives. We share everything with the Spirit. Just like we would a dear friend. How do we do that? Through spending time with the Spirit through our thoughts, our prayers, our scriptures.

I don't know about you, but I have never heard any words actually spoken by the Holy Spirit, like I can hear from a friend. Nor have I actually seen the Spirit in a personal form. But I believe that the Spirit is present and alive. It is like when you go sailing on a sail boat. If you put your boat out to sea and there is no wind, it just sits there. Then suddenly there is a gust of wind and your sail moves and your boat cruises! You sure know you are moving when the wind blows the sail. You can't see the wind, but you know when it is out there!

That is walking with the Spirit. You trust the Spirit with your heart, like you do a dear friend, and even though you can't see the Spirit you trust that it is there.

This leads us to the last question. What difference does walking with the Spirit make in our lives?

The Spirit is like an inner compass in our lives—always pointing us towards love. Love of God through loving ourselves and loving others. The Spirit awakens us to live in deeper relationships and purpose. The Spirit often speaks to us in the stillness of our hearts with a word of conviction or assurance.

The guidance of the Spirit can be like this. When the Holy Spirit is directing us away from something harmful, we very often have a heaviness, feeling of trouble, foreboding, or uneasiness in our spirits. When the Holy Spirit is directing us toward helpful things, we tend to feel a deep inner peace, an eagerness to see what God will do, and a feeling of joy.

The Spirit doesn't solve our problems, but invites us to see possibilities we would not have seen otherwise. Rather than remove our fear, the Spirit grants us courage to move forward.

When one of my girlfriends called me to tell me that her husband no longer wanted to be married to her, it was devastating. The four of us had so many fun times together. My friend was hurting so deeply and I was hurting, too. I hurt for my friend whose marriage was ending and for the couples' friendship that was ending. It was when my friend and I spent time talking, listening, praying and in silence, just being together, that we were able to each find the strength to move on. It took time, a lot of time, but now she is doing better than I have ever seen her.

Walking with the Holy Spirit does not promise a pain-free life. The Spirit doesn't steer us away from challenges, but rather gives us the power and the guidance to overcome them. Perhaps that is the word we can choose to share with people. We can share the good news that the Spirit continues to help us see possibilities where others see only problems and grants us the strength and energy to keep on going.

What about you? What have you experienced on your walk with the Spirit? Do you experience times when it all seems to be going well, life is going along just fine and you are experiencing the joy that comes in walking with the Spirit? Great! Because you are walking with the Spirit.

Have some of you found yourselves in a place you don't really want to be in your walk with the Spirit? Maybe you are bogged down or maybe something has happened to you and you feel like you have fallen. Well, you, too, are walking with the Spirit.

When we walk with the Spirit we take each breath in and out as God gives. That means that no matter where you are walking, if you are walking on a mountaintop experiencing the joy of all creation, or in a relationship where you are experiencing such deep love; the Spirit of God is right with you. And it means that no matter what path you have slipped off of, no matter what dark trail that you are on, the Spirit of God is with you, too! The Spirit of God walks with us no matter what!

Walking in the Spirit of God has that same promise for you. One way to continue to grow as you walk in the Spirit is to share your experiences with others. When you do you share the Spirit of God with them and you can be the one whom the Spirit uses to guide and inspire. As you leave today, be aware of how the Spirit of God goes with you and see where God leads you.

So I want to pause this moment and spend some time in prayer.

Is there some relationship or vocation where the Spirit is calling you?

Thank you for the Spirit of the powerful Creator God who is present within each one of us. Remind us each day of your presence. Stir up the desire you have instilled in us to be aware of your presence. Guide us through our thoughts, through scripture, and those who we will encounter this week. Amen.