

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
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Detroit, Michigan 48208
Nathan Johnson, D.D., Senior Pastor

*We Engage, Therefore, by the Aid of the Holy Spirit, to
Walk Together in Christian Love;*

Scripture: Galatians 5:16-26

But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. (Galatians 5:18)

Goal: To embrace and fulfill our covenant relationship with God and one another.

Objective: To understand how the Holy Spirit enables us to walk in Christian love.

Introduction:

In this month's lesson we will focus on understanding and embracing another aspect of our church covenant; *"Walking together in Christian love."* We must accept that the covenant is a both a solemn and joyful reminder of our commitment to grow in Christ. It is hoped that our behaviors, attitudes and actions will clearly demonstrate that we have entered into this covenant relationship with God and one another.

What are the signs of a church and its believers that show that they are growing and maturing in Christ? In Ephesians 4: 12-16, Paul writes to the church at Ephesus and points out our corporate responsibility to **perfect** (equip) and to **build up** the church. God gifts each believer to play an integral role in helping the body of Christ in the maturation process. Corporately we encourage each other so we can engage in the work of ministry; we build up each other so that we can stand against false ideologies that threaten to pull the church away from the truth of God, our salvation in Christ, and the "kingdom" work that is ours to do. Sadly, so few of our churches are engaged in equipping and building each other up and the work of the ministry frequently falls to the wayside. As we study together, we will be challenged to examine ourselves both individually and corporately. "Living as people of the Covenant exemplifies God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven. But this does not come about accidentally or automatically or by our might. To walk together in Christian love requires the aid of the Holy Spirit."¹ Join us as we discover what it means and how to make prayerful application to our lives.

Walking Together in the Spirit

The Holy Spirit convicted us of our sin and brought us to repentance. It is the Holy Spirit that indwells us and gives us the power to yield to the will of God. It is a day-by-day surrendering that must take place that allows us to be obedient.

¹ Turner, William C, *A Journey through the Church Covenant*, Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. 2002, 31

The Holy Spirit works in us to make God's purpose and plan for the body of Christ clear. He instructs the Body of Christ through the study of God's Scripture; the Spirit uses each of our spiritual gifts to build up the body. He constrains us to intercede through prayer as we make decisions. If we yield to the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit, we have confidence as we launch out to do kingdom building. Our transformation individually and corporately happens when we understand God's will and plan. It is the work of Holy Spirit to reveal God's will for us. As we work out our soul salvation, it is the Spirit who breaks down the old barriers and transforms us so we can walk together. We quench the Spirit when we seek solutions apart from His leading.

A lack of love and unity in the body of Christ is evidence that we are not being led by the Spirit. As we move in obedience to the transforming power of the Spirit, we not only grow, but we produce fruit.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." [Gal. 5:22-23.]

Walking Together in Christian Love

Therefore since the Holy Spirit indwells us we have the power to walk together in love. Walking in Christian love should be our habitual lifestyle and what drives all of our actions, speech, and thoughts toward one another. Paul tells us to be imitators of God as dear children and to walk in love as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us (Ephesians 5:1-2). By the enablement of the Holy Spirit we are able to put away the works of the flesh. When we walk in the Spirit, allowing ourselves to be controlled by the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). Instead, through love, we will serve one another and love our neighbors as ourselves (Galatians 5:13 – 14). Further, Paul says that love never fails. It is kind; it does not behave itself rudely. Love is not provoked and neither is it puffed up. It thinks no evil. It rejoices not in iniquity. It bears all things, hopes all things, and endures all things (I Corinthians 13: 4-8 NKJV). Through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we are to walk *together* in love. We are to uplift each other, encourage one another, strengthen and support one another. Our walk, our way of conduct, actions, and speech, should look different from the world.

By this all will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.
(John 13:35 NKJV)

Summary

In many of Paul's letters to the churches, the strife that is present in the church is a mark of spiritual immaturity. "Paul forces us to come to terms with a view of ourselves that is consistent with the way that God sees us. He insists that there is no neutral ground. The flesh and the Spirit are contrary. "The powers that would destroy the works of God have no intention of relenting. We need the power of the Spirit every day and every moment."²

² Turner, William C, *A Journey through the Church Covenant*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. 2002, 33

If there be any “striving” in the church, it ought to be our striving to overcome the natural tendencies of an unregenerate flesh. Our goal ought to be to ‘lean into’ and embrace the developing Spirit of Christ within us. We must submit to the transformative power of God’s Holy Spirit. We recognize that our individual struggle against the flesh is a common experience, but we cling to the fact that there is a divine power, which is common to all through faith in Christ. Though the striving is individual, our collective witness is that God’s power can deliver and keep us! Allow us to share a simple acrostic that helps us remember the transformation process for a church led by the Spirit. Through grace, God’s agent of transformation—the Holy Spirit works within us. **G.R.A.C.E.**³ stands for:

God’s
Redemption of us individually
Assures the
Church’s
Empowerment collectively!

God expects us to walk together in Christian love. Walking together leaves no room for old feuds. The needs of our communities and the world are too great; there is no time for petty squabbles over who gets the recognition or whose name gets called the most times. The Table of the Lord that we celebrate every first Sunday defies us to walk any other way. It stands in judgment against a fractured community that would bring some into the inner circle and push others to the fringes. But if we engage by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together, the Table of the Lord’s Supper is the sign of our power. It is the promise of our victory, the seal of our joy!⁴

Dialogue Questions:

1. God holds each believer accountable for the deeds done in the body of Christ. Are there areas in your life where you may be coming up short when it comes to walking together in love? Are there divisions that need to be healed, opportunities to seize?
2. In your journey of faith, what are some of the ways you engage the power of the Holy Spirit to help you walk in unity with your brothers and sisters in the Lord?
3. Are you actively involved with one or more ministries in the church that seeks to fulfill the meaning of “walking together in Christian love?”

³ Winters, Virginia. R. (1993). *“When Your ‘Brokenness’ Becomes a Part of God’s ‘Wholeness’”: A Ministry Proposal.*

⁴ Turner, William C. *A Journey through the Church Covenant.* Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. 2002, 35

*Where we are in the Church Covenant...**

HAVING BEEN LED, AS WE BELIEVE, BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior; and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to give it a place in our affections, prayers, and services above every organization of human origin; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, towards its expenses, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. In case of difference of opinion in the church, we will strive to avoid a contentious spirit, and if we cannot unanimously agree, we will cheerfully recognize the right of the majority to govern.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to study diligently the word of God; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be kind and just to those in our employ, and faithful in the service we promise others; endeavoring in the purity of heart and good will towards all men to exemplify and commend our holy faith.

We further engage to watch over, to pray for, to exhort and stir up each other unto every good word and work; to guard each other's reputation, not needlessly exposing the infirmities of others; to participate in each other's joys, and with tender sympathy bear one another's burdens and sorrows; to cultivate Christian courtesy; to be slow to give or take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, being mindful of the rules of the Savior in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, to secure it without delay; and through life, amid evil report, and good report, to seek to live to the glory of God, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

When we remove from this place, we engage as soon as possible to unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word.

****New Feature: Each month we will include a copy of the Church Covenant and highlight the current lesson. It is our hope that this will give the larger context for the passage being studied.***