

“Directions for the True Christian Life”

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Statistics say that the world has more than 2 Billion Christians. By God’s grace, we hope that our work under His power, would increase to include everyone! But the world pushes against our concept of being a Christian, a person who’s walking with the Spirit! Do we put conditions on our own discipleship? Do we make other things more important than following Jesus?

Today, let’s focus on the verses of our lesson from Galatians 5, and look at Directions for the True Christian Life! Verse 1, *“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”* In this opening verse, we learn three important things of living the True Christian Life. **You’re Free**. Satan is working very hard to have you fall away from your Christian faith. He comes at you with all the reasons you shouldn’t stay faithful to Jesus!

Paul, in this verse tells you to **Stand Firm**. We sometimes allow ourselves to not stand our ground, we adjust our position to whatever the people or the devil wants us to be or do! Because of our humanity, we sometimes change like the wind! We might stand firm when we’re here at church on Sunday morning, but as soon as someone outside asks us to join them, even though we know it’s wrong, we get involved and do it anyway!

That’s what sin is all about! As we walk with Jesus, we’re told **Don’t Submit to the Flesh**. By nature, we’re sinful! Adam and Eve proved that in the Garden! Listen to these words from the devil’s temptation and Eve’s response in Genesis 3:6, *“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”*

Many times we give so much time and energy to sinning, that sin is like a yoke around our necks! It keeps us from freely living following Jesus’ example. It causes us to have problems or be filled with guilt. Living by the Flesh is really living our own way not in God’s way!

Love One Another. Verses 13-14, *“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* When we were created, God gave each and every one of us a free will. That free will, if guided by us, takes us away from God’s Will! When Jesus was asked by a lawyer what was the greatest Commandment, answered in Matthew 22:37–39, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

Are you limiting your love? Jesus calls you to love all just as He loved all. But do you make conditions on whom you love? Or do you just love those who are like you? The Great Commission says to go everywhere and take the message to all!

When I came ten years ago, this church was known as the *“friendliest church in town.”* Its basis was living as loving! We need to never forget that, and continue to live it!

We need to **Walk by the Spirit**. Walking as a way of Life: It’s a continual and regular action, not an option. Walking with the Spirit implies progress, leading from where we

are to where we ought to be. Submission to the Spirit puts us on the direction where God wants us to be! The Spirit gives us power to live like Jesus! The Spirit becomes our guide, directs and gives help, and lifts us beyond our human existence!

But all of these things in life lead to a battle! You battle continually between your ideas, your desires and God's ideas and desires! The battle lines become drawn! **Desires of the Flesh are Against the Spirit. Desires of the Spirit are Against the Flesh.**

Verses 17-18, *"For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."*

The Struggle: We do what we don't want! If you're living by the flesh or by the Spirit, not both, when one is in control, the other fights for control. There's always a struggle in this life! When you become a Christian, you need to reject the flesh! But you still do stupid things! You say mean things, do hurtful deeds and cause harm to others. You give in to the flesh, and Satan only needs a few moments to ruin your life! It's those moments that make you who you are, and shows your character!

But when you're living by the Spirit, the Spirit's at work, moving you toward God, nudging you in the right direction, convicting your heart, allowing you glimpses of hope, and helping you to see God and His grace!

Instead of living by the desires of your flesh, you need to **Live by the Fruits of the Spirit!** Verses 22-24, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."* These are actions done through the Spirit, for God's glory, and are evidence of the life of a believer!

Those who are truly Christ's, must be like him in that they participate in His cross. They've crucified the flesh, which points to their identification with Jesus. We need to carry our cross of sin into the redeemed life, won for us in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection!

Keep in Step with the Spirit. Verse 25, *"If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit."*

I once read the story of a young woman who wanted to go to college, but her heart sank when she read the question on the application that asked, *"Are you a leader?"* Being both honest and conscientious, she wrote, "No," and returned the application, expecting the worst. To her surprise, she received this letter from the college: *"Dear Applicant: A study of the application forms reveals that this year our college will have 1,452 new leaders. We are accepting you because we feel it is imperative that they have at least one follower!"*

Keep in step with the Spirit! Follow Jesus Christ your Savior! Live your life showing the fruits of the Spirit in everything you do! Have others see the peace and focus you have in life because of Jesus! Help them see the difference Jesus can make in their lives too!