

Timothy ... will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

Paul - 1 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV)

In Christ

Or don't you know that all of those who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death...burial...and resurrection.

Paul - Romans 6:3-5 (NIV)

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Walking in the Spirit TOGETHER

Jerry Halbrook

Obeys the five commands listed below and experience your life "in Christ." Experience the abundant life through living by grace.

Notice that each command is either to believe something or to choose to do something.

THE FIVE COMMANDS

Believe

Romans 6:11

Reckon (believe) yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord

Choose

Romans 6:12

Do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey it in its lusts

Choose

Romans 6:13a

Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin

Choose/Believe

Romans 6:13b

Present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead.

Choose

Romans 6:13c

[Present] your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

We can and should obey each of these commands because Romans 6:3-5 teaches that all believers have been baptized into Jesus and as a result all believers have been baptized into his death, burial, and resurrection.

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In the eighties I spent a short time in the Philippines. While riding in an open-air, taxi-like vehicle I noticed the owner purchasing cigarettes one at a time from street vendors. I wondered why he didn't buy his cigarettes in quantities to save money.

Our hosts explained that in the Filipino culture people feel obligated for one another. In that country, a person who has a supply of consumable items would be expected to share.

To me, as an American, this seemed odd. We value our independence and privacy.

Unfortunately, these values influence our behavior in the church. Spiritual accountability seems foreign. Taking spiritual responsibility for others seems intrusive.

While preaching through Galatians I began to notice Paul addressing the congregation rather than the individual. Obviously, each believer must walk with God, but in the church we bear a corporate, spiritual responsibility for one another.

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I've always read Galatians 5:13-26 with my independent American mindset. This time I began to notice our corporate call to love, our corporate conflict of desire, and our corporate responsibility. In the Kingdom of God, people who understand grace are obligated to share it with one another.

I. Our corporate call to love (5:13-15)

Having warned against law-living—following the Mosaic law to gain God's favor—Paul advises against a fleshly application of this freedom, which would threaten the fellowship. His antidote was love. Love is the primary fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), and the Spirit produces his fruit in individual believers *for the sake of relationships*. That's why Paul admonishes the church—not the private, independent believer.

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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 (5:13).

In verse 13, "you" is plural. He addresses them as "brothers" (plural), which communicates the idea of family (a plurality). The verbs "you were called" and "serve" are both plural. And, using "one another" he presents an emphatically corporate responsibility to the congregation. We bear a mutual, reciprocal, and corporate responsibility for love.

But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another (5:15)

This double reference to "one another" stands out emphatically in light of the fact that all three verbs in this verse (*bite, devour, consumed*) are plural in form. He warns the body, not just the individual. Admittedly, individuals have to respond,

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II. Our corporate conflict of desire (5:16-24)

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).

We use the English word “you” as either a singular or a plural address. This verbal ambiguity and our American values prevent us from noticing that Galatians 5:16 uses the *plural* “you.” It speaks to the congregation, not just to the individual. Paul instructs the *church* to walk in the Spirit—together.

Our values of independence and privacy, as we hold them in the church, manifest desires of the flesh. The flesh, the sin nature, the old self, operates through *desire*. The desires of the Spirit and the desires of the flesh are antithetical (5:17).

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When we walk in the Spirit, through *our corporate union with Christ in death and resurrection*, we don’t fulfill or carry out the desires of the flesh. Conversely, when we walk in the Spirit corporately, we *do* carry out the desires of God.

Notice this statement, “it is God who works in you, both to will (*desire*) and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). The

word translated “you” in this verse appears in the plural. God is at work *in the body of Christ, not just in the individual Christian*, to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Every individual Christian has to contend with the flesh, but in this matter *we are our brothers’ keeper*. We acquired this relational responsibility when the Holy Spirit baptized us into the *one body* of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). When the Holy Spirit caused us individually to be born again, we though many (individuals), became one body (12:12).

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III. Our Critical Congregational Decision (5:25-26)

In verse 25, Paul changes his address from the second person plural “you” to the first person plural forms of “we” and “us.” He continues to address the church, not just the individual believer.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:25).

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The fact that we live by the Spirit obligates *us* to “walk in the Spirit”—*together*. Paul’s use of the conditional formula with its

first person plural forms (*if we . . . , let us*) calls us individually and corporately to mutual, reciprocal, spiritual responsibility.

He elaborates on this corporate life in the Spirit, this congregational walking in the Spirit, contrasting it with fleshly behavior that threatens the fellowship.

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another (5:26)

In verse 20 Paul alludes to manifestations of the flesh similar to *conceit, provocation, envy*. We have a daily congregational decision, to walk together in the Spirit or to war with one another as individuals (or as individual groups) in the flesh.

How does all this apply to the individual Christian and to the congregation?

In his excellent book, “A Graceful Body,” David Kuykendall teaches that a husband and wife relate gracefully by walking in the Spirit together. Similarly, the body of Christ functions gracefully as members walk in the Spirit *together*, taking spiritual responsibility for one another.

We’ve got to teach one another that love is a fruit of the Spirit, and that we walk in the Spirit through our union with Christ.

We’ve got to teach one another how to address the flesh so as to walk in the Spirit, through our union with Christ.

We’ve got to remind one another to walk in the Spirit in order to protect the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We should begin teaching every believer how to walk in the Spirit through union with Christ at the point of his or her baptism. We should also use that opportunity to inform them of their baptism *into one body*. We are corporately and individually responsible for teaching and exhorting one another in this matter of walking in the Spirit.

Book orders, newsletter contributions, or tax-deductible contributions may be sent to:

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