



## Keeping in Step with the Spirit

Message Notes, February 25, 2018

Galatians 5:25

Galatians 5:25 says, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit ..." This is truth, not only for our Harvest response, but for all of life!

What image comes to mind when you hear this call to "keep in step with the Spirit"?

Bishop Matt Thomas recently preached this passage and shared that he has often (wrongly) envisioned a little boy desperately striving to keep up with the long, fast strides of his father. But he came to see this invitation to "keep in step" expressed in three different directions: Going back ... Stopping ... Moving forward.

1. **Going back.** The scriptures are replete with the charge/encouragement to look back and remember:

- Who we are in Him – who He called us to be in the beginning of our journey.
- God's faithfulness to lead, protect, provide and carry us in the past, which gives us strength to stand now.
  - Deuteronomy 5:15
  - Revelation 2:2-3
  - Jeremiah 6:16
  - Psalm 136: 23-26

As we reflect on our 20-year journey as a church, we remember:

- Who God called us to be – not an organization or building, but to be a certain kind of people with a particular mission – "To awaken ordinary people (just as they are) to extraordinary life in Christ-centered community." This "Christ-centered community" would be characterized by the following mission measures, that we would be:
  - Passionate lovers of God
  - Ever-maturing followers of Jesus
  - Deeply devoted brothers and sisters
  - Generous stewards of His gifts to us
  - Empowered witnesses in our world
- His amazing faithfulness to work in and through us to pour out His river of life to us and others. Whatever has been good, life-giving, and transforming in us as a church is by of the grace of God and because we have earnestly tried to hear and follow the lead of the Holy Spirit.

2. **Stop (be still).** Equally as frequent is the invitation of God for us to stop – to "be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Be still and see (remember) that He is God – the One who holds the universe in my hands. The One who sees all things. The One who loves you perfectly. Cease your striving to manage and control your life! Be still; rest; surrender. Keep in step with Him. Move with Him. Let Him flow through you and do what only He can do.

- Exodus 14:13-14. Stand firm; be still; watch see God work.
- Acts 1:4. Stay in Jerusalem and wait.
- In our journey as a church, we experienced the powerful story of God calling us to stop in our eager pursuit of a new building. The need was great. We had been diligently preparing for



months. We had a plan. We had raised a lot of funds, but not enough. Some said, “Let’s move forward in faith; the economy’s good; it will work out!” But our leaders heard God say, “Stop.” They shared this with us, the congregation, and we also heard God say, “Stop.” And so we did. Two years later God released us to move forward – now with a much better, permanent building plan, with nearly half the debt, and with a deeper, healthier faith and vision as a people.

3. **Move forward.** This last “direction” is also throughout the scriptures – God doing a new, creative thing and calling His people to move forward with Him, often to step out in faith.

- Genesis 12:1. Leave your country and go to a land I will show you.
- Philippians 3:13-14. Forgetting what lays behind, I press on towards the prize.
- Isaiah 43:18-19. Forget the former things; I am doing a new thing.

Three different “directions” in which the Holy Spirit moves – all three valid, good and life-giving, but each calling for very different responses.

How do we know how the Holy Spirit is moving? He is indeed “like the wind – He blows wherever He pleases. We hear the sound of Him, but we cannot tell where He is coming from or where He is going” (John 3:8).

- Holy Spirit is the glorious, mysterious “Ruah” (wind of God, breath of God).
- We cannot predict Him, and we certainly cannot control Him. We can only “keep in step” with Him. It is akin to a dance: We must be close, we must be attentive, we must yield to His lead. It is a posture of trusting surrender, much like floating. It is a place of intimacy and love. It is a relationship, far more important than accomplishing a mission. Mission must flow out of the relationship. Fruit blossoms as we keep in step. Life flows from the dance.

“Father, teach us how to come close; how to listen; how to trust; how to move with you. We want to learn to dance!”

If God gave us the detailed plan of His purposes for our lives, we would get fixated on the plan; we would most likely take it into our own hands to manage it, and we would neglect our relationship with Him. This would end up being lifeless for us and sorrowful for God because the relationship is what He longs for. The relationship is His glory!