

1. What are some of the things we tend to take pride in?
2. What is the one thing Paul took pride in?
3. Ironically the cross was a mark of shame. Why would anyone boast in the shameful death of Christ?
4. Why would anyone boast in their own shame?
5. What are some practical ways we can boast in the cross?



360 DISCUSSION 07.09.17

## IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT

GALATIANS 5:25-6:15



Research tells us our brain is composed of a left and right hemisphere. The two hemispheres are very different, and we all tend to favor one over the other. If you favor the left hemisphere, you are detail oriented, love hard facts, think about the present in light of the past, gravitate toward math and sciences and are risk adverse. If you are right brained, you are big picture oriented, imaginative, think about the present in light of the future, gravitate toward the liberal arts, and are a risk taker.

So how about the Apostle Paul? Was he left or right brained? Was he more detailed oriented or more imaginative?

Some of Paul's letters split the difference. In Ephesians, the first three chapters are highly conceptual, and the last three chapters are intensely practical. The ratio is a bit different in Romans. There are eleven chapters of doctrinal content, followed by five chapters of practical instruction. Paul's letter to the Galatians is far more conceptual, than practical. It's deep. It's rich. It's imaginative. You could spend a lifetime in Galatians without ever scratching the surface.

Paul tells us we are children of Abraham by faith rather than physical descent. We have been incorporated into the age to come, yet still live and operate in the present age. We are not under the law, but are called to fulfill the law. And we contend with the flesh (which is dead, but very much alive) while we live by the Spirit.

Paul brings us down from the lofty heights by being intensely practical in the closing chapter. He draws on one of the major themes of the letter when he challenges us to, "keep in step with the Spirit." Then he gives us three very practical ways we can keep in step with the Spirit.

## KEEP IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT (5:25-26)

New Testament scholars like to tell us that imperatives (commands) always follow indicatives (foundational truths). In other words, we are called to act based on who we are in Christ. In verses 25 and 26, Paul reminds us that we live by the Spirit before he encourages us to “keep in step with the Spirit” and not to “become conceited.”

**VERSES 25-26** *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

1. What do you think it means to “keep in step with the Spirit?”
2. Why is it important for us to remember, “we live by the Spirit” before we attempt to “keep in step with the Spirit?”
3. Why is it important for us to remember, “we live by the Spirit” before we attempt to deal with “conceit” and “envy?”

## CARRY ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS (6:1-6)

One of the ways we keep in step with the Spirit is by “carrying one another’s burdens.” Paul gives us a specific example of how we can carry one another’s burdens in verse 1. He draws out the principle in verse 2. He reminds us of our biggest challenge in verses 3-5, and then draws the section to a close with another example.

**VERSES 1-6** *Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup>If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. <sup>4</sup>Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, <sup>5</sup>for each one should carry their own load. <sup>6</sup>Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.*

1. Why is it important that we restore those who are caught in sin?
2. Who should restore those who are caught in sin?
3. How should we restore those who are caught in sin?
4. What are some other practical ways we can carry one another’s burdens?
5. How does carrying one another’s burdens fulfill the law of Christ?
6. How does our conceit keep us from fulfilling the law of Christ?
7. Why is it important to share all good things with those who instruct us in the word?

## SOW TO PLEASE THE SPIRIT (6:7-10)

Another way we keep in step with the Spirit is by sowing to please the Spirit. Paul reminds us that living to please God and living to please ourselves have two very different outcomes, and then encourages us not to be easily discouraged in our pursuit of the things of God.

**VERSES 7-10** *Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. <sup>8</sup>Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. <sup>9</sup>Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

Someone described the principles of reaping and sowing as follows: (1) We always reap exactly what we’ve sown. (2) We always reap much later than we sow. (3) We always reap more than we sow.

1. How do those principles apply to sowing to please the flesh and sowing to please the Spirit?
2. What do you think it means for us to sow to please the Spirit (vv. 9-10 offer a hint)?
3. Why is it important that we do not grow weary in doing good?
4. How can we avoid growing weary?
5. Why is it important that we are especially attentive to those who belong to the family of believers?

## BOAST IN THE CROSS (6:11-15)

Still another way we keep in step with the Spirit is by boasting in the cross of Christ. Paul places the motives of his detractors in sharp relief to his own. They take a great deal of pride in their own accomplishments while Paul takes a great deal of pride in what Christ has accomplished for him. They boast in the flesh, Paul boasts in the cross.

**VERSES 11-15** *See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand! <sup>12</sup>Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup>Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh. <sup>14</sup>May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup>Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation.*