

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

When it comes to understanding the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the term “mystery” is often used. Reflecting on **John 3:8**, Graham Cole writes: “Jesus said that the Spirit’s action is like that of the wind. The movements of the wind have a mystery to them. You can’t tell where the wind comes from or where it is going. Likewise the Spirit. Indeed the Spirit blows where he wills. No one is master of the Spirit.”

- Sometimes walking in the Spirit can be related to a bit of mystery. The Bible uses the metaphor of walking to depict a persons beliefs, attitudes, way of life, encompassing desires, and actions.

Old Testament examples of the practice of walking with God

Psalms 1:1-6 “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. ⁴ The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; ⁶ for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”

Proverbs 4:11-19 “I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness. ¹² When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble. ¹³ Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life. ¹⁴ Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. ¹⁵ Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on. ¹⁶ For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble. ¹⁷ For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. ¹⁸ But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. ¹⁹ The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.”

- Walking in the Spirit then is your thoughts, beliefs and actions line up with His. In **Genesis 5:25** we see that Enoch walked with God and He took him. The metaphor of walking with God is heavily used in the New Testament as well.



New Testament examples of the practice of walking with God

Ephesians 5:15-21 “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Ephesians 2:10 “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Romans 6:4 “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

Colossians 4:5-6 “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”

Romans 8:1-4 “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

- But perhaps the expression that stands above them all in the New Testament is the concept of walking in or by the Spirit — **Galatians 5:16** “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”
- Walking in the Spirit is in direct opposition of the flesh — **Galatians 5:16-21** “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 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. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

What does it mean to walk in the Spirit? In the most basic sense, to walk in the Spirit means to live a life that depends on the Holy Spirit to:

1. Grow in godliness,
2. Obey God’s commands, and
3. Deny the flesh

1. Growing in Godliness

The late Ray Stedman told of asking a boy how old he was. Quick as a flash he said, “I’m twelve, going on thirteen, soon be fourteen.” That boy was eager to grow up!

2 Peter 1:3-13 “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. ¹² Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. ¹³ I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder.”



2. Obey God's commandments

Walking in the Spirit not only means relying on the Spirit to reorient one's entire life in a general sense, but also includes depending on the Spirit to obey specific commands of God. Indeed, this was one of the central promises of the new covenant as described in [Ezekiel 36:26-27](#) — “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”

3. Deny The Flesh

It's Intentional — [Luke 9:23](#) “And He was saying to them all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.’”

[Galatians 5:24](#) “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

It's Positional — [Romans 6:6](#) “...knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.”

It's a Choice — [Ephesians 4:22](#) “...that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit...”

It's a Consideration — [Colossians 3:5](#) “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.”

What does walking in the Spirit look like?

[Galatians 5:22-26](#) “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”

