

Rerouting: Following the Spirit's Lead

Pastor Gilbert Silva

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Galatians 5:19-23 (NLT) When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

Introduction: How many of you have ever been invited to a friend's house in a part of a city like Cleveland you've never been to? I know I have. You get in the car, type the address into the GPS, turn up the music, and drive off like you know exactly where you're going.

But after a few turns, the GPS says, "Turn around when possible." You think, *I know a shortcut and ignore it.*

A few wrong turns later, it chimes again: "Rerouting..." Annoyed, you turn the voice off. "No more interruptions," you say.

After driving in circles for 45 minutes, frustration growing, you finally give in. You pull over, turn the GPS back on, and follow the directions exactly.

Within minutes, you arrive—relieved, thankful, and embarrassed that you're now late.

Main Point: It's not enough to have a GPS if you're not going to follow it—and the same is true in our spiritual lives.

The Holy Spirit is our guide, and His leading will always point us toward love. When we ignore Him, we drift toward selfishness. When we follow Him, love becomes the evidence we're on the right path.

Truth: If we want to reach the destination God has for our lives, if we want to live in His purpose and reflect His character, and His character is love, we must stop overriding His voice.

We cannot truly walk in the kind of love that pleases God unless we learn to follow the leading of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit doesn't just point the way; He empowers us to love along the way. Ignoring Him doesn't just lead to wasted time and frustration—our love begins to wither. Because without His voice, our hearts drift back toward selfishness.

That's why Paul wrote in Galatians 5 about two distinct paths: one led by the flesh, the other led by the Spirit. And the evidence of which path we're on isn't found in how spiritual we feel, but in the fruit, we produce—and **love is the first and clearest fruit.**

So how do we know if we're truly following the Holy Spirit's lead? Paul gives us a clear and convicting answer in our opening passage where he contrasts "works of the flesh" with "fruit of the Spirit."

The works of the flesh are what we are accustomed to. In our humanity, we tend to be self-centered and narcissistic.

The actions or sins listed as works of the flesh are all self-seeking. Every one of them destroys love—sexual immorality, hostility, jealousy, selfish ambition, dissension. They are love's opposite.

But the fruit of the Spirit begins with love because love is the root from which the other fruit grow. Joy, peace, patience, kindness—all of these are simply love in action.

Fruit is the visible expression of power working inwardly and invisibly. The character of the fruit is the evidence of the character of the power producing it.

The Fruit (karpos) of the Spirit is simply that - His fruit.

Why love first? Because God is love (1 John 4:8). The Spirit who lives in us is love, and everything He produces will reflect His nature.

The fruit of the Spirit is what is produced in and through us because of His indwelling presence. It's not forced. It's not manufactured. Just like a tree naturally bears fruit when it's alive and healthy, a Spirit-filled life naturally bears love.

The fruit of the Spirit, or evidence that he dwells in us, can be seen in how we treat others.

1 John 4:12 (Phillips) It is true that no human being has ever had a direct vision of God. Yet if we love each other God does actually live within us, and his love grows in us towards perfection.

If the Spirit produces love, why do so many people fail to demonstrate it?

There could be many answers to this question, but in my walk with God and years of ministry, I've noticed three common issues: first, we aren't responding to His leading; second, we fail to stay connected to His Word and presence; and third, we fall into the trap of pursuing gifts and power rather than character and Christlikeness.

If we want to see the fruit of the Spirit and Christlikeness in our lives, we must learn to follow, stay connected, and prioritize character over spiritual gifts.

1. Follow the Spirit's leading.

Paul reminds us in Galatians 5:25 (NLT), "Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives."

This is not a suggestion; it is the only way to consistently produce His fruit. Just like the GPS illustration, it's not enough to have the Spirit present, we must submit to His direction.

The Spirit will always lead us toward love, but we must submit. Just like the GPS, His voice is useless if we ignore it.

Jesus also said in John 10:27 (NLT), "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

2. Stay connected to His Word and presence.

Fruit doesn't grow without a life source.

Jesus said in John 15:4-5 (NLT), "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit."

Our ability to love comes directly from our connection to Him. If we disconnect from His Word, His presence, and His love, our love for others will dry up.

3. Prioritize character over spiritual gifts.

The Corinthian church had spiritual gifts in abundance, yet Paul still had to correct them for their lack of love and maturity.

That's why 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NLT) says, "If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal... If I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing."

The gifts are important, but fruit is the proof that we are becoming like Christ.

When we follow the Spirit, stay connected to His life-giving presence, and pursue character over mere gifting, then Galatians 5:22-23 becomes more than a verse we quote, it becomes a reality we live.

John 13:35 (NLT) Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.

Conclusion: Some of us have been driving our spiritual lives with the "GPS voice" turned off. We want God's presence but not His interruptions. Today, the Holy Spirit is inviting us to tune in again to His voice.

If you've been ignoring His prompts, repent and realign. If you've been going in circles spiritually, stop and ask for His direction again. If you've been chasing gifts more than character, shift your focus back to the One who produces true fruit.

Your destination hasn't changed, God's plan for you is still ahead. But the only way to get there is to follow His leading, one obedient step at a time.

Galatians 5:25 (NLT) says it best: "Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives."