

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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The Spirit Helps Us Show Up Different

Joshua Symonette

It's both an honor and a privilege to be sharing with you this weekend. I want to welcome all seven of our locations as well as those who are joining us online and via podcast. I also want to give a big shout out to all of our fathers this weekend. Can we give a shout out to our fathers? Happy Father's day to you all.

Hey, speaking of a Father's Day I was thinking about my own dad and I was just reflecting on you know, some of the things that he's said and done over the years. And in thinking about some of those things, I just can't help but think that the man might be half crazy, I mean some of the things that he's said and done over the years have been just completely against the grain, even now he says, and does things that are not normal. I was thinking about when I was about 10 or 12 years old, somewhere in that age range, one day my dad was in the backyard and he had a weed eater and he was, you know, kind of trimming down some weeds and some grass and all of a sudden he yelled out to me. So I came to the back door and he says, son, I want you to come out on the back porch. He said, I, I think a snake may have bitten my boot. And so he began to show me his boot and I could see two little holes there that looked like, you know, it may have been from up from a snake bite. He said, now I just want you to stand here on the porch and watch me, just in case I pass out. You can tell someone what happened and you can call for help. Now I don't have to tell you that that's not a normal response. Like, normal people just don't do that kind of stuff. And you know, if I had a dollar for every time a family member, a friend or a neighbor would say, Mike, you are crazy because that's my dad's name, I mean, I might be paid right now. But look, the older I get and the more and more I reflect upon my dad's, you know, quote unquote craziness and crazy outbursts, the more I began to really see that may be, you know, a small portion of that is crazy. I mean, the things that really caught me off guard and the things that people would react to that they will say it's crazy I mean, it's just because they weren't normal responses. I mean they were against the grain, they were unconventional. And my dad has always been a person who's shown up different in the world now, not in a weird way. And you might not be able to see it on the surface per se. And you know, crazy is what I would say and crazy is what other people might think but over the years, my dad, when we were in discourse about many things, he would always use this phrase, 'the Spirit of God'. And he would talk about the Spirit of God. I would hear him say this hundreds and hundreds of times. And over time I began to understand that much of how my dad shows up in the world is his response to the activity of the Spirit of God in his life that causes him to have these responses that seem abnormal or go against the normal humanity and how he would respond in certain situations.

Now as we go through the Bible, we see several examples of this. We see several examples of the Spirit of God's stirring people and their responses being abnormal. Abraham, let's just start right at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis, Abraham. God says, Abraham, listen, I want you to pack up all your stuff and I want you to move your family and all of those with you to a land that I will show you. Now, I don't know about you, but I kind of sometimes need to know where

I'm going before I get there. I don't just get in my car and drive and figure out where I'm going to go, like I have a destination in mind. And keep in mind, Abraham is a very wealthy man. So he's got cattle and he's got people and he's got all so, he didn't just put it in a U-Haul and just say, well, we're going to drive until God tells us to stop. So this was a huge undertaking and not a normal response by Abraham. And as a result, we can see that Abraham God richly blessed him in his life.

And then does another example, one of my favorites, David, who was a young shepherd boy, he was the runt of the family but God had anointed him to be king. But, before that point David, one day it was on an Uber Eats run. His father, Jesse has sent him to his brothers who were in the army and they were going up against the Philistine army and the Philistine army had a champion named Goliath. And so David shows up on the scene with his food for his brothers and he sees this giant that the Israelite army is afraid of. But, David is so stirred by what Goliath is saying. He feels stirred in his Spirit and he feels like he needs to address this situation. And he says, you know what? I'm going to go out and fight this giant. Now keep in mind now, David has no military training. He's not in the army as a matter of fact; he only has a bag of rocks and a slingshot to go up against this giant. And if you know the story, he does eventually kill this giant. He's stirred by God's Spirit to address a situation and responds in a way that nobody else was responding.

Then there's Nehemiah, Nehemiah, a young man who's got it good, he's moved on up in life and he's working for a King at this particular time in his life. But then he hears about his people who are in disarray and his land that has been destroyed and his heart breaks. And so he prays about what to do and he feels stirred in his Spirit to address this desperate situation. Now it says nowhere in the story that Nehemiah was an engineer. It says nowhere in the story that he flip houses back in the day. It said nowhere in the story that he had the skill set to manage a group of people to go and rebuild a city wall. Yet Nehemiah stirred in his Spirit and he goes, and not only does he collect people to help him, but they rebuild this wall in record time.

We can fast forward to the New Testament and we see Jesus who was born of Mary, who was a virgin. And that was a miracle within itself, an act of the Spirit of God. But, Jesus quoting Isaiah 61 and Luke four, he said, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me to proclaim good news to the poor, to free prisoners, to set the oppressed free. And then Jesus says, after he's raised from the dead, he says to his disciples, now you will receive this same Spirit and you will receive power to go and be my witnesses.

And then my last example, and this is kind of where I want to land today, is a guy by the name of Paul. Paul was a man who was transformed by God's Spirit on a road to Damascus. Now, what you need to know about Paul is Paul hated Christians and Paul was persecuting Christians. But all of a sudden on this road to Damascus, one day he's going to persecute Christians, God speaks to him, knocks him down off of his horse, and he has this radical transformation. And so he goes from a persecuting Christians to becoming a Christ follower himself. And then not only that, he then goes and begins to establish the early church and then his letters become a theological foundation for us as we read throughout the New Testament. So if there's anyone who's qualified to talk to us about how the Holy Spirit transforms our life, taking us from one end of the spectrum to the other, I believe that is Paul.

And so this weekend I thought it would be appropriate for us to just zoom in on some of Paul's words to a group of Christians that he's writing to and a region call Galicia. If you have a Bible, we will be in Galatians chapter number five. We won't leave you hanging; we'll put the words up on screen for you. You guys can follow along with us in just a moment. But before we do that, allow me to just give you some geographical, sociological and theological kind of context for kinda what's happening in Galicia, what's going on with these people that Paul is writing to.

First of all, Galicia is in modern day Turkey. We're not historically certain as to the social scene and what's kinda going on in these cities socially. Paul doesn't really give us the same evidence or background that he gave us when he wrote to the Church of Corinth. So we're not really sure of that. We're also not sure of what's the socioeconomic status of these Christians. But here's one thing that we do know. We know that Paul is concerned and Paul is concerned because he's saying you who call yourselves Christ followers, you are following a different gospel, which is actually not a gospel at all, this is what he says in the opening book of an opening chapter of Galatians. And we know that the main issue of concern here is coming from the Jewish Christians who would have been opposed to Paul. And what they were doing was they were trying to influence the Galatian people to be circumcised, they were putting a lot of emphasis on circumcision. And you have to understand that that was the entry point for those who want it to be in the faith basically. It was a Jewish tradition that you had to be circumcised. And this is important to know because the majority of the letter to the people in Galicia, Paul is writing about this whole thing around the law and circumcision, so he's laying this foundation, he spends a good amount of time talking about it. But he says, listen, we are saved by faith in Christ alone, not by works, not by this religious tradition, not by these rituals, but we are saved by our faith in Christ alone. And so after he lays his foundation, he then turns his attention to this one little idea at the end of Galatians that we want to focus in on. So we're going to pick it up in verse number 13 in Galatians chapter number five, where Paul is talking to us about life according to the Spirit. Listen to what he says, he says,

"¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free."

And he's saying this part about being free because the law, it had a lot of weight and a lot of things that you had to do that was burdensome. But Paul is saying, you are called to be free, but now that you're free of the law, he said, listen,

"do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other."

Let me just pause right there real quick and help you understand that most of what Paul is writing in the New Testament is very sociological in nature where he's talking to them about how they interact and engage with one another because there was a lot of Jewish and Gentile clashing culturally. So he's telling them, you guys have to learn how to engage with one another and love one another, and so this is what he's talking about here. Then he goes on verse 16 he says,

"¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in

conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ *But (tell the person next to you, 'but') if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.* ¹⁹ *The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;* ²⁰ *idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions* ²¹ *and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

(I got another but for you,) ²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance (That word also means patience, long suffering), kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³ *gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.* ²⁴ *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.* ²⁵ *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.* ²⁶ *Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."*

I want to just talk for a few moments in the time I have left using this little subject, 'The Spirit Helps Us Show Up Different', 'The Spirit Helps Us Show Up Different'. There are so many things that I can unpack in all of these verses that we just read and I would love to take some time to exegetically examine all of those things but, you know, we don't have time to do that. Now I can take you to some churches where three and four hour services is nothing but that's not how we roll. So we're going to keep this thing rolling.

But before we drill down, I just want to point out that Paul is uniquely qualified to write this letter. He's uniquely qualified to challenge these Christians in this way. One because he is a Jew, he was circumcised. He's formally trained and educated in the Judaic law so he knows what he's talking about. Paul has also experienced the transformative power of what happens when the Holy Spirit shows up in your life and completely turns you around. He's also seen this happen amongst the people that he has ministered to and so Paul knows both experiences and he knows both perspectives. So I just want to zoom in on two things, two thoughts, two ideas that illuminate from what we just read today and then I'll get out of your way.

Paul is contextually here talking about where we take our guidance from. He spent all of this time talking about the law and then he shifts gears that says, listen, that's not where we take our guidance from, not the law. He is then specifically talking about the Spirit, but then he talks about how the Spirit and the flesh are in contrast with one another. Listen to what he says in verse 17 he says,

"⁷ The flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit"

The first point I want to zoom in on for you this weekend is the flesh and the Spirit are in constant conflict. The flesh and the Spirit are in constant conflict. Now, none of us really needed Paul to tell us that. I mean, this is not really a revelation to us. I mean, we know that we have moments where we don't make such good decisions. We know we have moments of weakness. We know that our flesh is weak at times, we understand that. We know that we're often tempted by not so good ideas. You know, maybe sometimes it's related to, you know, what we eat. You know, should I eat this doughnut or this bagel or you know, drink this coffee or juice or what... I'm describing the things we serve you at church on Sunday sometime. Maybe we shouldn't

tempt you in that way. But, and I'm not saying those things are bad per se, they're not bad per se, but we often have these decisions around what we consume, right?

- Or sometimes it's how we interact with one another, you know, should I send this email in this moment what I feel really frustrated?
- Should I have this conversation or should I give myself space to decide whether I should or not? And would it change what I say or even if I do say it
- Should I say yes to this opportunity that seems good?
- Should I say no to this opportunity because I'm concerned or afraid or whatever the case may be?

We have these moments and we all have plenty examples of these moments. Some we are cool to share some we will never share. But listen to the guidance that Paul gives us. He says walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the flesh. I mean it just sounds really simple, right? But here's what Paul is saying in essence, he's saying that our point of reference or the Spirit should be our point of reference. Now we constantly find ourselves in moments of conflict all the time, sometimes these are big conflicts, sometimes they are not. Sometimes they're external conflicts, sometimes they're internal, but we always find ourselves in places of conflict. Right? And those moments of conflict require decisions of us. So what Paul is saying, your point of reference for how you decide should not be based on your flesh, it should be based on the Spirit, that is the point of reference. And let me just say this because I think when we read what Paul says, when he's talking about, you know the acts of the flesh, you know, sexuality and you know, drunkenness and all these sorts of things, which is true, but let me just bring it down just a little bit because sometimes satisfying our flesh is not about a physical indulgence, it's not. Sometimes it's more about just the human need to be comfortable. We just want to be comforted, we want to be comfortable. And listen, nine times out of 10, if I got a choice, I'm not choosing to be uncomfortable, if it's up to me, I'm not choosing it. But that's why we have coaches, that's why we have people in our lives to push us, nudge us, help us do stuff that we maybe wouldn't do if we didn't have that influence in our lives. And the Spirit of God works through those people sometimes in our lives. And here's the thing, sometimes the best decision for us is the uncomfortable decision, it's not what our flesh wants, but it's what we need. And the goal for those of us who are trying to follow the path of Christ and we're trying to be Christ followers, the goal for us who call ourselves Christian, is to be like Christ. Well, have you read the life of Christ? I mean, a lot of stretching, a lot of things that would have been uncomfortable. And so in essence, that's what we're signing up for and we need the Holy Spirit to help us because if it's up to me, I ain't doing it, I ain't feeling it, not today, maybe not tomorrow and maybe not next week. God's Spirit is constantly drawing us in that direction, constantly wanting us to look like Christ.

The second point I want to zoom in on for us this weekend is to walk or live by the Spirit, requires consistent commitment. To walk and live by the Spirit requires consistent commitment. Now, right here, a very practical question that is probably turning in some of your heads is how do I walk or live by the Spirit? How do I do what Paul is just simply stating we should do? Well, listen to what he says. He says in verse 18 that we should be led by the Spirit with sound very familiar to what he's saying in verse 16 when he's saying walk by the Spirit, right? But it really isn't because you cannot be led by anything or anyone without some level of submission, without giving up some self control or giving up some part of your will, you just can't do it. There's a

permission you have to give. So if walking by the Spirit means the Spirit is our point of reference that we talked about in verse 16 then being led by the Spirit is our point of reverence. There's a deference there, there's a respect, there's an honor which then points to submission, meaning we have chosen to submit ourselves because you can have a point of reference that you don't submit to. It's not necessarily the same thing.

Pastor Mark, last week, gave us this equation and so I'm just going to borrow this from him. Last week he said, an awareness of the Spirit plus the submission to the Spirit equals filled by the Spirit. Well, let me tell you what that looks like. A consistent commitment looks like Spiritual disciplines. That's what it looks like; it looks like prayer regularly talking to God. It looks like reading scripture regularly reading the words that have been written to us to give us guidance. It looks like fasting, which is something that we're in the middle of where we give up something to say that I want to in this time draw closer and these are just normal things that you would do when you're building a relationship, It's the basics.

Let me just say this quick story, there, there's a guy by the name of Allen Stein who lives in our area. And Allen was a former basketball trainer. He's trained you know, some, some great names if I named you would know some of these folks. But Allen is now a speaker and a writer and he tells this story about Kobe Bryant and how he had heard that Kobe had these crazy workouts that he would do. And so Allen, while he was doing his training thing, he was out in, I think Vegas and Nike was doing a camp that Kobe was going to be helping to lead. And so Allen goes up to Kobe and he says, Kobe, listen, I heard that you had these ridiculous training regimens that I want to see for myself. So, can I just come, sit and observe to see what you're doing? Kobe said, yeah, man, that's all good; just meet me at four o'clock. And so Allen said, hey, well, that's the same time that the camp is going on and Kobe said, no, four o'clock in the morning. So, Allen, not deterred, he said, okay, I'm going to show Kobe that I'm serious about what I do and that I'm a serious trainer. I'm actually going to beat Kobe to the gym. So I'm going to wake up at three o'clock, I'm going to catch a cab and I'm going to get there before Kobe gets there. So he catches the cab and he gets there and he pulls up and he sees the lights are on in the gym and he gets out of the cab and he faintly hears a basketball bouncing. And then he walks in the door and Kobe is already in a full sweat doing his warm-up before the workout.

And so Allen comes in and he sits down and he was so intrigued and he's watching Kobe and he's bored out of his mind because Kobe is doing the most basic and the most fundamental things that Allen says I teach middle school basketball players. And so I sit there and I watch him and when the workout is over I leave, I don't speak to Kobe, I don't speak to the trainer. But curiosity just gets to me later on in the day so when we had the camp session, I go up to Kobe and I said, Kobe, I'm just curious, I sat and watched you minute after minute, do these very fundamental drills and I'm just wondering why you are doing such basic things. And Kobe's response is, why do you think I'm the best in the world? Because I never get bored with the basics. And see, Kobe understands that his commitment to the basics help him show up differently. He's got talent, he's got that but his commitment to the basic things help him show up differently. And his commitment to the basic things is tied to his love for the game.

These are not things that Kobe has to do, but he recognizes that if I'm going to show up different, I've got to be committed to these things. And in essence Paul is telling us the same thing; he's

saying life walking by and being led by the Spirit that's our point of reference and that's our point of reverence. That's our example that we look at and then that's how we need to be submitted because that is how we get empowered to live the life that God desires for us. The problem is we see the greatness of the Kobe's and we see the greatness of the people that we admire, but we don't see the sacrifice to the basics that really make them who they are.

Let me see if I can land a plane for you this weekend and just sum this up. About the year 1485 Italian painter, Fillipino Lippi painted a portrait called the Virgin and the Child with Saints Jerome and Dominic. And for many years, critics deem this perspective in this painting to be off. They said that the hills and the surrounding landscape were out of balance almost like they were going to fall out of the painting itself. St Jerome and Saint Dominic looked awkward and uncomfortable. But it wasn't until this art critic named Robert Cumming realized that the previous critics had the wrong perspective. They had been looking at the painting standing up, but Lippi had intended for the painting to be an aide in prayer and he had intended for people to look at the painting as they were kneeling. And so when Cumming changed his posture and kneeled, looking at the painting, everything shifted. The proper perspective came into view and all of these little things that he had missed before, we're now clearly viewed by him and he was able to see them in the proper proportion. Listen the same is true for us when it comes to the life in the flesh versus the Spirit, our flesh, our human desires, our concerns often limit our perspective causing us to draw conclusions based on an improper perspective based on how we feel, based on what we see, based on what we think. But a life walking by and being led by the Spirit as Paul speaks of in Galatians five it helps us to have the right point of reference and the right perspective. Listen, it's possible for us to be looking at the right thing and still had the wrong perspective. This is what establishing an intimate relationship with God through Jesus does for us, the same Spirit that was in Jesus is at work in us. But it is the consistency or a commitment to be consistent in our growth and intimacy with God that allows us to get on the right wavelength that ultimately allows us to show up different in the world around us.

And then Paul says that if we do this, we will see evidence. And the evidence is the fruits of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. But get this not defined based off of our flesh's perspective because the Spirit defines it very, very differently. And when we embrace that, they show up very differently in the world because love is not just for the people that were down with it. It's not just our friends, not the folks we're cool with, the people that vote like us. No, no, no, no, no. Jesus said, hold up buddy, hold up, love your enemies too. Matter of fact, bless those who persecute you, we don't like that part, but that's what it says and that's what life is, that's how love is shown, it confounds people, how in the world can you love someone who murdered your family? How in the world can you love people who hate your people? It's life in the Spirit joy, and that's not about happiness because happiness means that I got good things happening, but I might not have good things happening in my life, but I can still have joy because of not based on my circumstances. It doesn't mean that things are down or up or it actually doesn't matter either way. Peace, listen, it don't mean that I don't have chaos going on in my life. I might not have the calmness that I want. I might be in the midst of a storm, but listen; I might not know what's going on. I might not know how I'm going to get out of it. I might not know where I'm going to end up. I might not know when it's going to end, but guess what? I know who! I know who holds my future. Matter of fact, back in the day there was a song that said because he lives I can face tomorrow, the living is

God's Spirit in us. All fear is gone because he lives in me. It doesn't mean that it's not crazy all around us. Listen, I don't have time to go through all the Spirits and then I'm getting a little bit too, I'm sorry, all the fruits of the Spirit; I'm getting a little bit excited.

But let me just park it right here. Cause if I was in a black church I would need the organ to keep going.

Paul says this simply, very simply, Paul says, the flesh and the Spirit are in constant conflict. He states it very plainly, again, not a revelation for us, we know that, but only consistent commitment to walk by and be led by the Spirit is what produces fruits of the Spirit. Not fruits according to our interpretation of how love, joy and peace are supposed to work. But notice how, and even I did it, we stop at love joy, peace, we ain't talking about patience and long suffering and we don't like those fruits, those ain't the fruits we eat, you know, we pass them by that in the store. No, we're not; we're not picking those up.

But a consistent commitment to live by the Spirit based on our Spiritual disciplines is how we show up different in the world. Because here's the thing, you don't have the ability to love like you need the love. You don't have the ability to have joy in the midst of craziness like you get. You don't have the ability within your flesh to do it. And Paul is saying, hey, you can go get circumcised, you can do all these other things, but its life in the Spirit, that's where it's at. Now this ain't like it feels good or it's going to be, you know something all exciting all the time. No, but I promise you this, there will be evidence and then check this out, when you live a life according to the Spirit, then you start picking up points of reference of the Spirit. So when you get in certain situations in the future you're like, Oh, I remember when this happened before and he can open this door, or this door, oh, I remember when I was in the..., you begin to to get more confidence. And then you can help those around you, live a better life because they're looking at the fruits that you are producing.

So my prayer for you this weekend is that if you really are a Christ follower or you really want to grow in your relationship with Christ and you really want to, you really want to go to the next level. Well we got to have a commitment to want to be led by the Spirit. And that requires submission. And oh, by the way, that requires us to embrace this little curse word that we have in church world called obedience. And so that's my prayer for us this weekend.

Let's pray. God, thank you so much for who you are. Thank you for how you show up in our lives through Jesus giving us an example of how we ought to live. Now, God, I know we pick and choose the examples that we like, you know, we like, you know, some of the miracles, but we don't ever want to be in need of a miracle. I know we like how you bless and how you do all of these things that make us feel good, but there are also times where you need us to embrace the struggle. You need us to embrace the hard things because you're trying to grow us and you're trying to stretch us. And so God help us, help us to bring back to our remembrance that you're trying to produce fruits of the Spirit in us. And so God help us to humble ourselves and to understand that our flesh and our Spirit are in constant conflict, but a consistent commitment to be led by the Spirit with our disciplines and how we pray and read scripture and we fast will help us show up different. All these things we ask in your son. Jesus' name. Amen.