



Welcome to our Sunday Service (30/05/21)

Keeping in step with The Spirit

Prepared by Mervyn

*Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart
Teach me to move in the power of Your spirit
Teach me to walk in the light of Your presence
Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart*

*Teach me to love with Your heart of compassion
Teach me to trust in the word of Your promise
Teach me to hope in the day of Your coming
Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart*

*You wrote the rhythm of life
Created Heaven and Earth
In You is joy without measure
So like a child in Your sight
I dance to see Your delight
For I was made for Your pleasure, pleasure*

*Let all my movements express
A heart that loves to say yes
A will that leaps to obey You
Let all my energy blaze
To see the joy in Your face
Let my whole being praise You, praise You*

Written by:
CANDY PARTON,
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**Happy Birthday to Kathleen (31st May)
and Eden (5th June)**



God Bless You Both!



Heavenly Father, help us to settle ourselves in your presence as we come to worship you. Still our anxious thoughts and help us to focus on you. We come to you empty and invite you Holy Spirit to fill us again, teach us more of your truth and bring us closer to Jesus. Thank you for the daily forgiveness you pour into our lives, help us to pass it on to those who offend us and empower us to do your will. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

We want to spend some more time this week focussing on the wonderful third person in the Godhead that we know as The Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that there is only one true God made up of a community of three unique members; God the Father, God the Son and God The Holy Spirit. These three unique characters are utterly devoted, totally loving and full of perfect respect toward each other.

In **Genesis 1:26** when God created mankind he said, **“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”**. Notice the plural word **our** image not the singular my image.

There are many verses that mention each member of the Godhead. Here are a couple:

Just after Jesus was baptised **Luke 3:22** says **“And the Holy Spirit descended upon Him [Jesus] in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, “You are My [the Father’s] beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”**



Jesus talking to his disciples after his resurrection says in **Matthew 28:19** **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit . . .”**

This wonderful mystery of Father, Son and Holy Spirit has led the church to adopt the word, ‘Trinity’ to try to capture this beautiful community of love and respect. How incredible that we were made to reflect such a community, and even more wonderful that we are invited into the heart of such a community.

Mark and Sarah spoke last week about how the Holy Spirit powerfully impacted the disciples of Jesus at Pentecost resulting in the birth of the church, and the week before Kathryn touched on the concept of The Holy Spirit leading our prayer and worship as one of the core values of our church.

The Church is made up of individual people who the Holy Spirit has led, and is continuing to lead to Jesus, but He not only wants to lead us to Jesus, he wants to fill us with the attitudes, heart and resources of Jesus to fulfil God’s purposes for our lives. Let’s read from Paul’s letter to the Galatians, here are some verses from **Chapter 5**.

16So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17For the flesh craves what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are opposed to each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

19The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; 20idolatry and sorcery; hatred, discord, jealousy, and rage; rivalries, divisions, factions, 21and envy; drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying one another.



There is so much in these few verses, but the part that jumped out to me recently was the phrase in **verse 25. "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."**

What pictures come to mind when you think of keeping in step with someone?

I have three pictures that come to mind.

1, Enjoying a walk or a run with a friend 2, Dancing with a partner 3, Marching with an army.

Let's use these three pictures as the basis of our talk. Each of these pictures has its own unique sense of rhythm that tie into different seasons of life, and each picture also has a different level of engagement. I hope and pray that these rhythms connect with you today, and that you may find yourself engaging with The Holy Spirit in a new or deeper way.

1, Enjoying a walk or run with a friend

I don't know about you, but I find that if I'm out walking with a friend, I automatically start to fall in step with them and synchronise footsteps, this is particularly true when I go running with a friend. However, it's impossible to keep in step with someone if you don't firstly have a companion to keep in step with!

The amazing truth behind Paul's instruction in **Galatians 5** to, '**keep in step with the Spirit**' is

that we have the opportunity of a constant companion and guide to walk through life with, a running companion with whom we run the race! Because of God's gift to us of his Holy Spirit we need never be alone, *but* notice we keep in step with him, not him in step with us! He is Holy and can never compromise his standards, but will graciously lift us up when we fall and coach us back into step with himself time and time again if we keep looking to him as our companion and guide. In **1 Peter 1:16**, God is quoted as saying, "**Be holy, because I am holy.**" We will be looking at the theme of pursuing holiness in a couple of weeks time.

The picture of walking or running in step with a friend, for me symbolises doing everyday life together. The Holy Spirit wants to do everyday life with us, to comfort us, convict us and to point us to Jesus reminding us of his attitudes and teachings. As Mark mentioned last week, The Holy Spirit makes Jesus real to us.

As we keep step with the Holy Spirit he will also nurture his fruits in our lives. We read the list of these fruits earlier from Galatians Ch 5, **Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness gentleness, and self control.** Notice these things are called fruits - fruits don't happen overnight, nor do they happen by striving, (I must be joyful!) Fruits appear as a result of good seeds being planted and germinating, then young plants being carefully tended over a period of time in the right conditions and eventually the fruit appears!



Here are a couple pictures from my allotment, of carrots before and after weeding. Without this nurture the carrots would have to struggle against the weeds and lots of them would not make it.



We read in Galatians chapter 5 obvious things to weed out of our lives. Paul refers to them as acts of the flesh; **sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; zoidolatry and sorcery; hatred, discord, jealousy, and rage; rivalries, divisions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.** . As we walk in step with the Holy Spirit, He WILL identify areas in our lives that need weeding so our lives can bear even more of his fruit. Some of those weeds may be deeply rooted, invasive and out of control, a bit like the bind weed in our garden which Kathryn is constantly weeding out. Otherwise the teeniest piece of root left un-weeded will spread like cancer under the soil and support itself by winding up other plants, binding and choking them. One of the Holy Spirit's roles is to convict us of our sins which is a bit like weeding a garden! Being convicted of sin is not a negative thing, but a wonderful sign that the Holy Spirit is at work in your life and clearing it of things that will restrict and harm you.

I like the definition of a weed that says "A weed is any plant in the wrong place!" Sometimes in our lives there may be issues that we think are weeds that seem to remain, even though we ask God to remove them. However, gradually he rearranges our hearts and puts that particular weed that has become invasive and controlling within it's right boundary and carefully manages it so that it becomes a unique and beautiful thing in it's right setting. What we thought was a weed, in the hands of The Holy Spirit can be trained, contained and flourish in it's right place.

The Apostle Paul prayed three times for God to remove a thorny issue from his life and God's response was "no" because this particular weed kept Paul dependant upon God's grace, and that ultimately produced more fruit in his life. So as we keep in step with the Holy Spirit he will nurture his fruit in our lives.

2, Dancing with a partner

The picture of keeping in step with a dance partner makes me think of learning particular steps, practising unusual moves, stretching ourselves out of our comfort zones and mastering new techniques as we follow the lead and training of our dance partner. It is also creative, invigorating, energetic and joyful!



If you watch Dancing on Ice, or Strictly come Dancing, you will know the commitment required and the willingness to keep getting up off the floor until a particular move is perfected. This led me to think about the **gifts** of the spirit as opposed to the **fruits** of the Spirit. **The fruits** of the Spirit often naturally grow without too much effort on our part as we keep in step with the Holy Spirit, but the **gifts** of the Spirit require us to practice and take risks.

If I gave you a flute as a gift it would be a lovely present, shiny and nice, but if you never took it out of its case and learned to play it, it would be a wasted gift. The Holy Spirit gives us various gifts to build up the church. Here are some listed in [1 Corinthians Ch 12](#)



⁴ There are different kinds of gifts. But they are all given to believers by the same Spirit. ⁵ There are different ways to serve. But they all come from the same Lord. ⁶ There are different ways the Spirit works. But the same God is working in all these ways and in all people.

⁷ The Holy Spirit is given to each of us in a special way. That is for the good of all. ⁸ To some people the Spirit gives a message of wisdom. To others the same Spirit gives a message of knowledge. ⁹ To others the same Spirit gives faith. To others that one Spirit gives gifts of healing. ¹⁰ To others he gives the power to do miracles. To others he gives the ability to prophesy. To others he gives the ability to tell the spirits apart. To others he gives the ability to speak in different kinds of languages they had not known before. And to still others he gives the ability to explain what was said in those languages. ¹¹ All the gifts are produced by one and the same Spirit. He gives gifts to each person, just as he decides.

Do you sense that God may have given you any of these gifts? If so, have you ever had an opportunity to practise them? Would you like to have an opportunity to practise them?

Last Saturday I attended a very good conference at the Parish Church about developing the gifts of the Spirit in our lives and it's an area that we can practise as we meet together again.

The other thing I take from dancing with a partner is the intimacy and romance as two people move in harmony together. One of the names given to the church in the Bible is 'The Bride of Christ', which I know for some people is a strange uncomfortable concept, but this isn't about male and female, this is about the Spirit of God being deeply committed and connected to human spirits, which is the love story of the ages. God's spirit wants to be intimately connected with our spirits which leads us to complete fulfilment and satisfaction. How wonderful that God made us with spirits that are compatible with His Spirit and that he delights to engage with us on this deepest level. This is part of our destiny, and as we dance in step with God's Spirit we have little glimpses of this future glory.



3, An Army marching in step

Our third picture is of an Army marching in step together, and this for me is a perspective of the church. As many individuals who are personally in step with the Holy Spirit, coming together we create an environment where the presence of God's Spirit is intensified, a bit like a magnifying glass concentrating the sun's rays to create a hot spot.



As we worship God together, led by his Spirit, not only are our own lives further changed and restored, but the wider environment is impacted and brought closer to God's ways. As we worship God together we become a powerful force for great good.

In 1831 a brigade of soldiers marched over a strong suspension bridge at Broughton near Manchester. The rhythm of their marching resonated with the bridge and caused it to break up and dozens of soldiers fell into the water. As a result of this event the army orders soldiers to always break step as they cross over a bridge to avoid the powerful force of many feet in unison. In fact the new millennium bridge in London had to be closed shortly after it initially opened to be reinforced as it started to vibrate if too many people happened to be walking in step!



I find this concept quite exciting. As we worship as a group of people in step with God's Spirit we can cause demonic spiritual strongholds to collapse and spiritually dark places to be illuminated by the light of God, setting people free and opening hearts and minds to receive the truth of The Gospel. **Ephesians 6:12** tells us that **"we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of ^[a]the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

A well trained army (the church) marching in step with Jesus, causes enemy opposition to flee, and liberates people. It's also a great picture of unity and a shared purpose, of people working together and supporting each other to achieve a common goal, to bring peace and security to the people and honour the king. I love verse 6 from Zechariah chapter 4 that says **"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord"**. No force is ultimately able to over-power or outwit the Spirit of God.

I wonder what 'Keeping in step with The Holy Spirit' means to you today? Maybe you *are* 'in step' right now and enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life, or perhaps you're really struggling and not aware of God's presence. No matter where you're at, if you humbly invite the Holy Spirit to bring your life in step with him, HE will get to work in your life. You may not notice any massive difference right away but as you keep looking to him as your walking companion, your dance coach and your commanding officer, you will be aware that you are no longer where you were, and you are on a journey. You **can** be assured that he is with you.



1, May we enjoy walking in step with God's Spirit each day and experience His fruits growing in our lives as he helps us to identify the weeds of sin and gives us the grace to die to self and live for Jesus.

2, May we learn to dance in step with God's Spirit as we pursue His gifts and experience increasing intimacy with Him

3, Let us find our place marching in step together in God's Army carrying *His* fragrance, breaking down enemy strongholds, impacting our wider community and reflecting *His* glory.

Let us keep in step with the Spirit. Amen



May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.