

Reaching Forward - #7 Developing in My Life of Faith

[Slide 1] Discipleship Sermon #7 Developing in my life of faith as evidenced by the fruits of the Spirit

[Slide 2] What is a Disciple? What does a disciple look and ACT like?

[Slide 3] As a member of the Seventh-day Adventist movement, and recognizing our prophetic role in history, a disciple of Jesus Christ is one who is growing in an authentic relationship with God and others.

I will commit to: REACHING FORWARD

[Slide 4] Following God through daily spiritual disciplines

[Slide 5] Opening myself to God by participating in regular corporate worship

[Slide 6] Returning time, talents, and resources to God

[Slide 7] Willingly serve my local church and community in the context of my spiritual gifts

[Slide 8] Anticipating spiritual growth in others by being in genuine relationships

[Slide 9] Reproducing the discipleship journey in others through the power of the Holy Spirit

[Slide 10] Developing in my life of faith as evidenced by the fruits of the Spirit

[Slides 11,12,13] What happens when you are trying to navigate unfamiliar roads and you come across signs that give misinformation or confusing information? None of us want to be lost, especially spiritually lost.

What is the key to living a life like Jesus? The Way to Victory: Although an inward conflict between the flesh and the Spirit always will rage in the heart of every believer, the Christian life does not have to be dominated by defeat, failure, and sin.

[Slide 14] In Galatians 5:16-25, Paul describes what happens when we walk with Jesus.

¹⁶ “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. ¹⁹ Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² 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 Now 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 walk by the Spirit.”

The passage contains five key verbs that describe the type of life in which the Spirit reigns.

[Slide 15] To Walk

First, the believer needs to “walk” in the Spirit (v. 16). The Greek verb is *peripateo*, which literally means “to walk around or to follow.” The fact that the verb is in the present tense implies that Paul is not talking about an occasional walk but rather a continuous daily experience. In addition, since it is also a command “to walk” in the Spirit, it implies that walking in the Spirit is a choice we have to make on a daily basis. This verb describes state of being continuously in the Spirit, daily taking His hand to be led in a journey together.

Do you remember when your children learned to walk: their fingers tightly wrapped around one of your fingers or the hem of your skirt? They bravely dared to take on a new skill, excited about the adventure, because you were there to help.

[Slide 16] To Be Led

The second verb is “to be led” (v. 18). This suggests that we also need to allow the Spirit to lead us where we should go (compare Rom. 8:14, 1 Cor. 12:2). It is not our job to lead but to follow. The American sign language symbol is one fist following the other, close, but one leading.

[Slide 17] To Live

The next two verbs appear in Galatians 5:25. The first is “to live” (*zao* in Greek). By “live,” Paul is referring to the new-birth experience that must mark the life of every believer. Paul’s use of the present tense points to a new-birth experience that is to be renewed daily. Each day becomes a joyful, opportunity, decision, to ‘walk with Jesus.’ We look for His miracles, anticipating wonder and purpose in His mission for that day.

[Slide 18] To Walk

Because we live by the Spirit, Paul goes on to write that we also need “to walk” by the Spirit. The word translated as “walk” is different from the one in verse 16. Here the word is *stoicheo*. It is a military term that literally means “to draw up in a line,” “to keep in step,” or “to conform.” The idea here is that the Spirit not only gives us life but should direct our lives on a daily basis. We learn the joy of keeping in step with Jesus. This becomes a daily direction. As older children know how to walk, we recognize our purpose as one of Jesus’ disciples and are eagerly finding His divine appointments for each new day.

[Slide 19] To Crucify

The verb Paul uses in verse 24 is “to crucify.” This is a little shocking. If we are to follow the Spirit, we must make *a firm decision* to put to death the desires of the flesh. We crucify the flesh by feeding our spiritual life and by starving the desires of the flesh.

[Slide 20] Do you remember this slide from the presentation about worshipping God? Our sinful world has ‘skewed’ the picture of life. Its center and focus are all wrong. Its like a copyist’s picture of a great master piece, it is ‘just not right.’

[Slide 21] In our passage, Paul shows us the counterfeit next to the true work of art. Jesus created us in His image, with His plans for our lives. We were to be partners with God in the work of the universe. Our worldview was to be just like His!

[Slide 22] This truth is described in the fundamental belief of Adventists - Growing In Christ. By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and

[Slide 23] empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and

[Slide 24] on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience.

[Slide 25] *“Be Like Jesus All Day Long”* (please sing with me if you recognize this little chorus.)

*Be like Jesus, this my song,
In the home and in the throng;
Be like Jesus all day long!
I would be like Jesus.*

[Slide 26] Indicators of Fruit Bearing

1. A Love for God, Family, Self, and Others
2. Joy Despite the Circumstances
3. At Peace with God and Man
4. Patience in Trials
5. Kindness, Goodness, and Gentleness Towards Others
6. Genuine Faith in God
7. Self-control in Everything

[Slide 27] Philippians 2:5-8 reflects our earlier passage from Paul on the fruits of Spirit which are elegant virtues that describe a life lived ‘like Jesus.’

⁵ *“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”*

[Slide 28] Disciples = Living Pictures of God

A little boy sat down at the kitchen table with his crayons and a big sheet of blank paper, and he started to draw. His father; noticing the youngster hard at work at the table, stopped to look.

“What are you doing, son?”

“I’m drawing a picture of God,” said the little boy.

“But son,” said the father, “You can’t draw a picture of God. Nobody knows what God looks like.” The little boy thought for a moment and said, “Well—they will when I get through!”

Developing in my life of faith as evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit is God’s masterpiece truly reproduced in our lives--a “way” of life to be “walked.”

[Slide 29] Activity: iFollow stories: Your group will be given a story and given 10 minutes to discuss and answer the question: How did this story describe a fruit of the Spirit lived out in a human life? (Give each group a “Fruits of the Spirit” story to read and discuss. If you have a smaller group, divide into groups of two for this discussion time.) Be prepared to report to the whole group.

[Slides 30-40] After the sharing at the larger group, take some time to go through these slides of the seven discipleship characteristics (markers) as a brief review of your time together as group. (If your time and setting allow, you might wish to celebrate a simple, agape communion together.

[Slides 41-45] You might have chosen a chorus that has become the theme song for your study time during the discipleship series or have been singing #330 “*Take My Life and Let It Be.*”

Conclude with a group season of prayer thanking God for these discipleship leaders and asking for His special anointing on their lives.