**First Things First**

**ABC’s of The Christian Life**

Growing in Grace: Keeping in step with the Spirit

Or,

**Galatians 5:16-26**

**The Problem:** We are supposed to walk with God, but how do we do it? “Walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

 If analogies are difficult, then spiritual analogies are twice the challenge. So often we use and hear biblically sounding commands such as, “come to God in prayer,” or “take your burdens to the Lord,” or even “Walk in the Spirit.” What do these things really mean? Clearly they are not speaking geographically of literal paths or valleys, but they do raise the broader question of what it means to have a relationship with an invisible Being whose normal pattern is not speaking out loud to people. What are the logistics of living the Christian life? How do we relate to God?

**The Solution:** Jesus was incarnated “God with us,” becoming permanently one of us, dying for us, and now the Spirit actualizes His presence in us. “(The Spirit) will glorify me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you.” John 16:14

 Jesus spent much of the evening before He died speaking to His disciples about the coming of the Spirit. He was emphatic not only that it was better for the disciples if He left, but also that the coming of the Spirit demanded it (John 16:7-15). At Pentecost, the disciples were “filled with the Spirit,” and Jesus’ promise to be with them began to be fulfilled. John 14:15-24 explains that the Holy Trinity resides in and among us, teaching us and leading us into truth and obedience. So we can and should relate to Jesus as a Person Present. When we read His Word, He speaks to us, and when we pray, He hears and answers us. This is “walking in the Spirit.”

**The Dynamic:** Faith working through love Galatians 5:6

 Walking by faith does not mean casting our fate to the wind or living life with an imaginary friend. Our age has become cynical about anything we can’t experience through our senses, and now compares faith in God with Bigfoot sightings or alien abductions. But faith IS the sense by which we encounter God. His presence is real as we read His word and pray. God is not silent, but has revealed Himself first through Creation, second through the Bible, and finally and completely through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-3). He does not require us to suspend our rationality in order to believe. On the contrary, when we consider the brevity of life, the nature of man, and the alternatives to Jesus (atheism, materialism, agnosticism, or the thousands of world religions), the claims of Christ make the most sense of all.

**Life with Jesus:** In Scripture, Walking = Living (eating, working, loving. . .)

1. Truth: Walking with Jesus means submitting to the authority of Scripture.

 The Bible Jesus Read predicted Him and was validated by Him. 3 John 3, 4

2. Holiness: Walking with Jesus means acting in the Spirit. Romans 5:12, 17; 8:9

 Since we live in and by the Spirit, so we act and speak accordingly, which is opposite to our old nature, and requires a battle. Galatians 5:16-25

3. Forgiveness: Walking with Jesus means being serious about the forgiveness of sins.

 Our sin put Him to death; now, we put our sins to death. Romans 8:13, 14

 Walking in the light means confessing and forsaking our sins. 1 John 1:5-10

4. Advent: Walking with Jesus means living for His return. 1 John 2:28, 29; 3:2, 3

 We can’t anticipate Jesus’ Kingdom and oppose Him. John 14:15, 21, 23

5. Love: Walking with Jesus means loving His children. Rom. 13:8-10; 1 Jn. 4:12, 13

 Living for Jesus is not a burden. 1 John 5:2, 3. Living for yourself is.

***Walking with Jesus is living by the power of His resurrection based upon His promises and brought to our experience by His Spirit, in both the forgiveness of sins and love for others.***