

Good morning! Growing up in my home church, young people went through some fairly extensive training in doctrine---it would probably be considered *very* extensive in most churches today. Before we could receive Communion we had to learn and recite the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments), the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles Creed, and the Nicene Creed. We had to go through two years of Confirmation Classes and pass written and oral exams on the items I just named, plus questions taken from Luther's Small Catechism. We memorized and had to recite certain passages of scripture in front of the class. All young people who wanted to be able to take Communion had to do these things---nobody was exempted. We don't see that very much in churches today and I think that is a loss. On the other hand, we were not encouraged to actually pursue a vital relationship with God...and that is certainly a loss, too. This morning, let's take a moment together to consider a very brief passage taken from Paul's letter to the congregation in Galatia:

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. **Gal. 5:25**

The primary theme of Paul's letter to the Galatian congregation was that they had received the Gospel of grace and that they should not go back to trying to live out a relationship with God by keeping the Law. This church had a problem---they were legalistic and had a hard time relying on the grace of Jesus. Unlike the congregation in Corinth, they were not oriented toward the work of the Holy Spirit. They considered themselves superior because of their strong emphasis on "right doctrine". Maybe you have attended a church like that---maybe you are at one now. Paul isn't against correct doctrine but he takes issue with that approach. In today's passage, he says, "*If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*" What does that mean, anyway? What does it mean to "*keep in step with the Spirit*"? I like to walk with Pam. Have you ever walked beside someone for a while and noticed that eventually, your steps matched the other person's steps? It might not be intentional but when the two of you are walking together, you often find yourself "*in step*" with each other. So it is with being in step with the Spirit. When we are seeking to be attentive to God, we find ourselves listening for His whisper, going where He wants to go, doing what He is doing. You have to walk together for a while before you find this happening---getting in step takes time in any relationship. You don't get in step simply by *wanting* to be in step; you have to make time to walk together. Do you want to live by the Spirit? Then make time to get in step with the Spirit!