

Leadership

Trinity CRC, November 18, 2018 AM
Renewal Lab series

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Rev. Richard deLange

Dear friends in Christ,

I want to learn how to do a dance. And it's called The Floss. I suspect many of our young people here this morning can teach me to do it. Do we have any volunteers to come here for a minute and give me a quick lesson? Any young people? Any young adults? I'm serious. Come on up.

ALTERNATIVELY: Well, if we have no volunteers, I have a tutorial I found online. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ru1ZZhxLX2I> **Start at 2:00 to 4:07**

That's the Floss. Now you might wonder what that has to do with the sermon. Well, today we're going to consider leadership as part of the process of church health or renewal.

There is so much to talk about when it comes to leadership in the church but I want to focus on this dance metaphor.

Dancing in Step with the Spirit

The important thing to remember is that the Holy Spirit is our dance partner. He takes the lead. He's the teacher and guide. And when we lead anything in the church, we always need to be following the lead of the Spirit. The Apostle Paul who writes 1 Corinthians 15 is fully aware that life in Christ which he is living, enjoying and teaching to the church is based on grace. Verse 10 says,

1 Cor 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

The grace of God comes to us because of Jesus. And that grace is applied to our lives through the work of the Holy Spirit.

So spiritual health and renewal is about joining God in the work he is doing and desires to do through you and me by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul had his tasks and we have ours. This is about joining the dance of the Holy Spirit. When we are step with the Spirit that's when our life becomes the most meaningful. Congregation, we'll find joy in pursuing the higher purposes that God has in mind for us, regardless of the challenges we face in our dance. The Apostle Paul didn't have it easy. If you've been doing the Acts readings this past week, you read how he was falsely accused and imprisoned. But he presses on in the confidence and joy that he was walking in step with God's plan. Dancing lock-stop with the Spirit.

History shows us that in every authentic renewal movement leaders lead because they are empowered by the Holy Spirit. They are dancing in step with the Spirit. That's why we've been stressing prayer and Bible reading for our church council and all of us. Those get us all in step with the Spirit. For growth, maturity and renewal to happen, it's vitally important that our leaders are in dance-step with the Spirit. Then leaders are in the position to lead. As some teachers say, "The church cannot rise above the level of the leadership."

It's worth saying at this point that we are all leaders in some ways. Savannah, a young teen, is leading people in dance through her online video. Older siblings lead younger ones. Parents lead their children. Friends lead one another. We lead in various places and ways. We lead by example on the team or when out with friends. We can always be asking the Lord and asking ourselves what the Lord is up to in our sphere of influence so that we can be at his service every day. That's what dancing in step with the Holy Spirit is about.

Dancing on the Foundation of Jesus

Secondly, we also need to recognize that we follow the risen Lord all together as his church. When Paul starts off this chapter, he makes it clear that in Christ we have been given a solid or firm place to stand (v.1). In other words, we are all following the Spirit as he grounds us more firmly in Christ. We dance on the solid foundation of Jesus. He has accomplished salvation and new life for us. We are new creatures because of his death and resurrection. We are filled with his Spirit to do good things in our world in the power of our resurrected Lord.

Therefore, the focus of our leading is pointing people to Jesus. It's part of my job description as a church leader to point people to Jesus. And while it's not part of your job description at your workplace, it should be on your mind daily. How does my new life in Christ show my employees, my co-workers, classmates, and others that I do my work for Jesus? Do they see that because of Jesus' transforming work in my heart, I do my work to honour God? I'm confident in Christ's solid foundation and work for me so I know I'm eternally secure. Therefore, I'm free from being enslaved to human desires like worrying about my life. Jesus holds my life in his hands, so I live in abandon for him, for his kingdom and for his glory! That's what I see lived out in the Apostle Paul. In 1 Corinthians 15, he's all about Jesus. In v.3, for example,

1 Cor 15:3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

And then he goes on to share how Christ rose from the dead and appeared to many people—proving his resurrection. Thus Paul is confident of what Christ has done because Christ, the solid foundation, has faithfully been transforming him.

C.S. Lewis once wrote: "The Church exists for nothing else but to draw (people) into Christ, to make them little Christs. If we are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time." That's a strong statement. But it's true. And it means we need to be focused on the dance of the Holy Spirit. He's always pointing us to Jesus. Always grounding us deeper in Jesus. Always leading us to a fuller life that shows and tells that Jesus is our solid foundation. Always giving us an opportunity to show love to a neighbour. Always giving us a chance to respond to the gospel of salvation through our resurrected and reigning Lord Jesus.

Responding: Following the Lead

Now, thirdly then, we must follow the lead of our resurrected Lord as he works in us through the Holy Spirit. This is our response to Christ's work in us and for us.

The Apostle Paul surrenders his life to the service of Jesus his resurrected Saviour and Lord. He writes in v.10:

1 Cor 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Paul confesses that he has been delivered from his death in sin and resurrected to new life in Christ. So his response is to work hard in preaching the gospel. And he's not bragging about himself. No, he reminds us "*yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.*"

So, let me give an illustration from my life as well. I have never done this before but I'm going to tell you about my giving to illustrate how responding to the Spirit works for me; to show one of the ways that I try to dance with Spirit as a member of this church. And I do in light of a discussion we had our church council meeting this past week. There it was mentioned that it's important for our pastors to talk about giving more often and without shame.

I'm thankful that I had parents who taught me to give to the Lord first, not as an afterthought. Tithing is something I've always done. For me, it's a simple thing to do. But it must be a response to God's grace. Whenever I get a paycheque, the Lord gets the first 10%. That goes to the church budget. Other offering causes come on top of that.

For years now, I have felt that I can't out-give God. It's a joy to give because I see how the Lord blesses it. I can't explain it. It doesn't make sense on paper. But no matter how much I give, I see the Lord giving it back to me in some fashion. We know that the Lord promises to bless those who put him first. That blessing isn't always clear and immediate. But we keep doing it because that's what our

response requires. For me at least, a tithe or 10% of my paycheque to the church is part of the regular dance.

So for the last few years, we've given around \$10,000 to the church each year. Those donations were part of our regular commitment to the Lord's work because of what he has done for us in Christ, the solid foundation. It's what he calls us to do and it's the minimum I want to do.

But after all we've been through this year and all the expenses that came along with that, I have been humbled over and over again by the Lord's provision. All the ways in which the Lord has blessed us, all the love and care and gifts he's given to us through the church. Amazing! So, rather than hold on to things too tightly, Patsy and I gave an extra \$5000 to the budget. That was a response of gratitude for God's special blessings to us.

I say that to illustrate how I have danced with the Spirit in the area of finances. And I say with the Apostle Paul, "*yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.*" I am certain many of you share my experiences. My hope is that this will lead others to enjoy giving as we do and to see how we can't outgive the Lord. I honestly can say that I'm richer because the Holy Spirit has helped me to hold the things of this world lightly. It all belongs to God in the first place.

I'm sure lots of you give generously. I don't know what each person gives, and I really don't want to know. But I know that people here support the work of the church in various ways. Finances is just one way. Whatever you do, this is your response to the God's goodness to you in Christ, your way of dancing with the Spirit.

And that Spirit-filled joy shows, I believe, by the lack of complaints. I listen to some people from other churches complain constantly about their church. I hardly ever hear anyone complain about things here. And I would say that's because people who are investors don't quickly complain. Good leaders might see problems but then they seek to solve them so that the dance goes off without a hitch. They don't sit on the sidelines and bellyache.

If anyone could complain about the church, it would have been Paul. He saw LOTS of problems in the Corinthian Church. Just read the whole book of First Corinthians sometime. But he never complained. Instead, he stepped up with the Spirit's strength and insight to help the church address her problems. He offered lots of advice, and even admonition, but always because he loved the people. He loved the church. And he wanted to help her enjoy the dance with the Holy Spirit.

He loved the church because he knew the Lord Jesus loved him first. And the church is Christ's body, his bride. So Paul helped lead the church to a greater view of Christ and greater obedience in their dance with the Spirit.

Daryl and Sheri are now leading their two little children to love and serve Jesus. I am certain they are doing that because they did that for the young people when they were youth elders for the past four years. We have so many young couples like this who are taking their dance with the Spirit seriously in their family life.

I was chatting with a senior after the funeral yesterday. She said she was coming to the potluck today to see where she can find a place to serve. That tells me she is listening to the Holy Spirit and eager to enjoy the dance.

We have young children who says they want to make profession of faith. They are leading the way in obedience to the Spirit and helping us all—young and old alike—to listen more attentively to the Spirit's call to dance with him each day.

We have people who serve on church committees. The counting committee, for example, has been working behind the scenes for 5 decades. Are they leaders? Yes, they show us that faithfully doing your work—even when no one hardly notices or is aware of it—is important and blesses the church. Moreover, it blesses those who do it.

May the Lord help us all to be leaders who follow our Lord Jesus faithfully. People who pick up our feet and enjoy the dance of life with Christ in his body, the Church. People who listen to and obey the Spirit's call each and every day for us to become better disciples of Jesus.