

Purpose Lived

THE POINT

*We live out our purpose as we are led
and filled with the Spirit.*

THE PASSAGE

Galatians 5:16-26

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

In 1901, oil was discovered in Texas, right at the time America would begin craving oil. Prior to this, oil was used chiefly for kerosene lamps. But the dawn of the 20th century brought with it the invention of the internal combustion engine. Cars, airplanes, and the neighbor kid's noisy little motorbike soon followed. Suddenly, we had a great need for oil—and lots of it.

A lot of Texans were just eking out an existence until oil was discovered. Great wealth lay under people's land in Beaumont, but it wasn't doing them any good. It wasn't until a mining engineer named Anthony Lucas drilled a well that sent oil gushing up 1,000 feet in the air. With the oil came prosperity for so many.

Most of us live our lives like it's 1900 in Beaumont, Texas. We're getting by without ever realizing the great potential that resides within us. If you are a follower of Christ, He has placed His Holy Spirit in you. The same God who brought this universe into existence and raised Jesus from the dead is living in you!





5 MINUTES

GET INTO THE STUDY

LEADER PACK: Display **Pack Item 1**, the “**Thrive: Living on Purpose**” poster, to review the major theme of this study, along with the focus of each session.

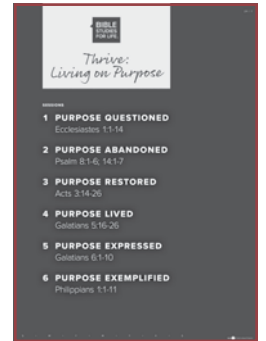
DISCUSS: **Question #1** on page 37 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): **What’s something people in your hometown love to brag about?**

GUIDE: Direct the group to **The Bible Meets Life** on page 37 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of being led and filled with the Spirit by reading or summarizing the text or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

RECAP: Most of us live our lives like it’s 1900 in Beaumont, Texas. We’re getting by without ever realizing the great potential that resides within us. If you are a follower of Christ, He has placed His Holy Spirit in you. The same God who brought this universe into existence and raised Jesus from the dead is living in you!

GUIDE: Call attention to **The Point** on page 37 of the PSG: **We live out our purpose as we are led and filled with the Spirit.**

PRAY: Transition into the study by thanking God for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to help us learn how to follow Him more closely through this study.



STUDY THE BIBLE



10 MINUTES

NOTES

GALATIANS 5:16-18

¹⁶ I say, then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Use the “Fruit” option (page 55 of this Leader Guide) to introduce the idea of spiritual fruit.

READ: Ask someone to read aloud Galatians 5:16-18 on page 38 of the PSG.

RECAP: Once we come to Christ and we have a newfound purpose in Him, one might think all our problems disappear. Nope. We've been freed from the penalty and power of sin, but sin doesn't want to roll over and play dead. Sin is a habit too many of us are used to, and we easily give in to the pull of the old sin nature. Paul referred to this as “the flesh” (v. 16), that nature we're all born with that once enslaved us to sin.

The antidote to the old sin nature doesn't reside in our ability. We don't simply try harder not to sin. We've been given the Holy Spirit. The moment you trust Christ for salvation, He comes to live in you through the presence of His Holy Spirit. God Himself comes to indwell you and empower you to holy living.

GUIDE: Use the commentary for the verses on the next page of the Leader Guide to explain the context for this passage.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 39 of the PSG: **What does walking by the Spirit look like?**

RECAP: We see this in the phrase, “You don't do what you want” (v. 17). You may want to do what God desires, but your flesh entices you to fail, resulting in sin. This was clearly Paul's view in Romans 7:14-25, where he said his flesh caused him to fail at doing what he really wanted to do.

The solution to the problem is simple: walk by the Spirit. But how do we do that? When Paul wrote to the Colossians, he instructed them to “set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Col. 3:2). When our minds are occupied with the things of this world, we have difficulty keeping in step with the Spirit. On the other hand, when we dwell on the things of God's kingdom, we find the Spirit leading our lives more easily. Saturating our minds with Scripture has a way of pushing out the ways of this world!

TRANSITION: Walking by the Spirit keeps us from fulfilling sinful desires. In the next verses, we see that walking in the flesh leads to sinful behavior.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

Who's someone you know who really seems to walk by the Spirit?

GALATIANS 5:16-18 *Commentary*

Connection to the Point. Walking by the Spirit keeps us from fulfilling sinful desires.

Context. Paul wrote this letter to Christians living in Galatia (part of modern-day Turkey), a region he visited during his first and second missionary journeys (Acts 13–14; 16:6–7; 18:23). The Galatians struggled regarding the relationship between the law and the gospel. Some legalistically argued that Gentile converts had to participate in Jewish practices, such as circumcision and observance of special days, in order to be in right standing with God (Gal. 3:1–4; 4:8–11). Paul argued that believers were free from such observances of the Mosaic law (3:5–26; 5:1–12; see Acts 15) and were to live the Christian life in freedom under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:13–26).

Walk (v. 16). The Greek term for *walk* (*peripateo*) literally means to physically walk, but it is also used, as it is here, in reference to a person's lifestyle—how one lives or conducts oneself. The walk Paul was referring to is the Spirit-controlled life of the believer. The Christian must be intentional in how he or she lives (Eph. 5:15–21), in moment-by-moment dependence upon the indwelling Holy Spirit. In Galatians, Paul described this as walking by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), being led by the Spirit (v. 18), living by the Spirit (v. 25a), and keeping in step with the Spirit (v. 25b).

By the Spirit (v. 16). All people are born with a sin nature (“the old self,” Eph. 4:22) to which they are enslaved (Rom. 6:15–23), and they are spiritually dead (Eph 2:1–3). When a person repents and puts saving faith in Jesus Christ, he or she is spiritually made alive (“born again,” John 3:1–21; “alive with Christ,” Eph. 2:4–9), is permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit (John 14:15–18; Rom. 8:9–11), and receives a new nature “created according to God’s likeness” (“the new self,” Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). The old nature was crucified with Christ; it is dead, so the believer is no longer enslaved to it (John 8:34; Rom. 6:15–23). Through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to reject the “desire of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16), so as not to return to living in sin (“the flesh”), and now is able to live according to the new nature (“the new self,” Eph. 4:24; see John 15:5) through which the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–26).

While walking by the Spirit is done in the power and by the leading of the Holy Spirit, the believer must be intentional (day-by-day, moment-by-moment) in appropriating the Spirit’s power by faith, choosing to reject the desires of the old sin nature (“take off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires,” Eph. 4:22) and choosing to walk (live) according to the new nature (“put on the new self,” Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) in obedience to God (Rom. 8:4).

Walking by the Spirit is the life-long process of being transformed in Christlikeness (also known as sanctification). Salvation is through grace by faith alone in Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:15–18; Eph. 2:8–9), so walking by the Spirit does not earn salvation. It is the process that begins after a person is saved. Walking by the Spirit is intentionally living as God would have us live. It is done out of love and gratitude for God having redeemed us through Jesus Christ and is both a life of freedom (from enslavement to sin) and obedience to God (Rom. 6:15–23; Gal. 5:13–14).¹

The flesh (v. 16). *The flesh* (*sarx*) can literally refer to the human body (Luke 24:39) or a worldly perspective (2 Cor. 5:16). However, in this context the term refers to the fallen, sinful nature to which all people are enslaved before conversion (Rom. 6:6–7) and which tempts believers to sin.

You don’t do what you want (v. 17). As long as we are in this world, as Christians we will experience the spiritual conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. Although believers still struggle with temptations to sin (and sometimes fall into sin as well), through the new nature in the power of the Holy Spirit, we should strive to live a righteous life of obedience to God (Rom. 6; Eph. 4:17–32).

Led by the Spirit (v. 18). The verb tense of *led* (*ago*) indicates that the Spirit’s leadership is ongoing in the believer’s life. Whereas before conversion, the life of the individual was dominated by the flesh (enslaved to sin, John 8:34; Rom. 6:6), now the believer is empowered and guided by the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Spirit enables the Christian to live a life of freedom and obedience to God (Rom. 6; Gal. 5:13–14).

STUDY THE BIBLE



10 MINUTES

NOTES

GALATIANS 5:19-21

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I am warning you about these things—as I warned you before—that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

READ: Ask someone to read aloud Galatians 5:19-21 on page 39 of the PSG.

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from pages 39-40 of the PSG. We can divide these characteristics and works of the flesh into four groups.

- **Sexual sins.** These include “sexual immorality, moral impurity, [and] promiscuity” (v. 19).
- **Spiritual infidelity.** When people commit “idolatry” and “sorcery” (v. 20), they’re looking to other things as their gods.
- **Relational sins.** These are sins seen in our relationships: “hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger” (Gal. 5:20). Each of these sins creates tension with others, erects barriers between people, and destroys relationships.
- **Sins of decadence.** Paul warned against “drunkenness” and “carousing” (v. 21). Carousing is mentioned three times in the New Testament. Each time it’s linked to drunkenness and could be identified with wild parties.

GUIDE: Use the commentary for the verses on the next page of the Leader Guide to further explain these works of the flesh.

RECAP: Yes, we still sin, but Paul’s warning about those who won’t inherit the kingdom of God is about “those who practice such things” (v. 21). These people have a regular practice of sinning. This is continuous behavior for them. Living in the flesh is a lifestyle. Anyone who calls himself a Christian but lives a blatant, ongoing life of sin is someone showing no evidence of salvation. “So you’ll recognize them by their fruit” (Matt. 7:20).

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 40 of the PSG: **What are the consequences of tolerating works of the flesh in our lives?**

TRANSITION: In the next verses, we see that walking by the Spirit produces Christlike character.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How does our culture view the various works of the flesh listed in these verses?

GALATIANS 5:19-21 *Commentary*

Connection to the Point. Walking in the flesh leads to sinful behavior.

Works of the flesh (v. 19). These are sins that characterize nonbelievers, those who are enslaved to sin. The unchecked “desire of the flesh” (v. 16) leads to the *works of the flesh*. The Holy Spirit in the believer is what curbs the desire of the flesh. While believers can and do still sin, their lives should not be characterized by the works of the flesh.

Sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity (v. 19). These are three related yet distinct words that describe sensuality of a sinful nature. *Sexual immorality* (*porneia*) refers all sinful sexual behavior (1 Cor. 5:1). This is the term from which we get the word “pornography.” *Moral impurity* (*akatharsia*) emphasizes the defilement of sexual sin and the resulting separation from God (Eph. 5:3). *Promiscuity* (*aselgeia*) refers to the unbridled lack of restraint as it relates to sexual sin (Rom. 13:13).

Idolatry, sorcery (v. 20). *Idolatry* (*eidololatria*) involves giving the worship due to God to the things He created. *Sorcery* (*pharmakeia*) was a problem rampant in Galatia (Acts 19:19). It involves the use of magic and trying to manipulate demonic powers rather than trusting in the Lord. The term can also be translated “witchcraft.” Furthermore, in its most basic sense, this word refers to the use of drugs (referring in the first century to drugs used for occultic purposes) and from its root the word “pharmacy” is derived.

Hatreds (v. 20). Shifting to relational sins, Paul listed eight words that describe the breakdown of interpersonal relationships (vv. 20-21). The first term, *hatreds* (*echthra*), refers to a deep-seated enmity directed against another, and can have either God (Rom. 8:7) or other people (Luke 23:12) as its object.

Strife (v. 20). The term (*eris*) describes one who has a contemptuous temper that is focused on others.

Jealousy (v. 20). The term (*zelos*) can be used of a strong, positive interest in someone or something. It can also, as here, refer to a negative emotion one has over someone else’s success or achievements. In this case, it describes a rivalry characterized by envy and malice.

Outbursts of anger (v. 20). The nature of this term (*thumos*) is dependent upon the context. It is used to describe God’s holy wrath (Rev. 14:10; 19:15) and Satan’s fury (12:12). In this context, it could be translated “fits of rage” and describes hostile verbal outbursts against others.

Selfish ambitions (v. 20). This word (*eritheia*) comes from Greek politics, where it was used to describe those seeking office. In this context, it describes those who through their words and activities seek to manipulate people and circumstances for personal gain.

Dissensions (v. 20). Like “selfish ambitions,” this word (*dichostasia*) has political overtones. It describes those who cultivate a sense of belonging to an elite party or faction.

Factions (v. 20). Similar to “dissensions,” *factions* (*haire-sis*) is derived from a verb meaning “to choose” and emphasizes that factions or elite parties are created by individuals who make personal choices to create such division and strife within a group or congregation.

Envy (v. 21). Similar to the word for “jealousy,” *envy* (*phthonos*) means exhibiting ill-will, spite, and displeasure toward another when that person gains some advantage or prospers. It is an inordinate desire to possess what another has.

Drunkenness, carousing (v. 21). Both of these terms deal with intemperance (sinful excess). *Drunkenness* (*methe*) relates to the abuse of alcohol. *Carousing* (*komos*) has a broader meaning and refers to gatherings (wild parties, revelries) and may even be associated with pagan worship that included both drunkenness and sexual misconduct.

Will not inherit the kingdom of God (v. 21). Those whose lives are characterized by the works of the flesh demonstrate by their actions they are not born again, and so unless they repent and place their faith in Christ, they will not enter (*inherit*) the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is His rule and reign in the believer’s life, now with abundant life (John 10:10) and in the future eternal life in the presence of God (Rev. 21–22).

STUDY THE BIBLE



15 MINUTES

NOTES



ALTERNATE QUESTION:

What are some practices that help you keep in step with the spirit?

GALATIANS 5:22-26

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things. 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 keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

READ: Ask someone to read aloud Galatians 5:22-26 on page 39 of the PSG.

DO: Direct the group to **Engage** with “The Fruit of the Spirit” on page 41 of the PSG (page 55 of this Leader Guide) to give the group an opportunity to evaluate God’s work in their lives.

LEADER PACK: In advance, make copies of **Pack Item 3, “The Fruit of the Spirit”** handout, and distribute them to the group. Invite different volunteers to read each point aloud.

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from page 42 of the PSG: Greg Pouncey helps us understand the fruit listed in three groups.

- **Fruit tied to our hearts and minds:** Love, joy, and peace.
- **Fruit tied to our relationships:** Patience, kindness, and goodness.
- **Fruit tied to our conduct:** Faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.²

GUIDE: Use the commentary for the verses on the next page of the Leader Guide to further explain the fruit of the Spirit.

DISCUSS: **Question #4** on page 42 of the PSG: **What are some habits that help you crucify the flesh?**

RECAP: It’s only when we walk by the Spirit that we are able to live out our purpose and display these godly character traits. When we walk in the Spirit, we naturally live as God desires. The law can’t make us good, but the Spirit dwelling in us has the power to change us.

DISCUSS: **Question #5** on page 42 of the PSG: **Which aspects of the fruit of the Spirit do you need Him to grow in you?**

GUIDE: Refer back to **The Point** for this session: **We live out our purpose as we are led and filled with the Spirit.**

GALATIANS 5:22-26 *Commentary*

Connection to the Point. Walking by the Spirit produces Christlike character.

Fruit (v. 22). The term *fruit* (*karpos*) is used in a variety of ways in the Bible. It can refer to one's offspring (fruit of the womb, Luke 1:42; fruit of one's loins, Acts 2:30), praise (fruit of one's lips, Heb. 13:15), benefits or results (fruit of one's ministry, Rom. 1:13), profit (to one's account, Phil. 4:17), one's conduct (Matt. 3:8,10; John 15:5), and the fruit of the tree of life in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:2).

Fruit of the Spirit (v. 22). This is the godly behavior the Holy Spirit produces in the believer. Jesus emphasized that believers can bear spiritual fruit only by remaining connected to Him (John 15:5). Paul identified nine characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit, which he grouped in three categories. The first three are related to the believer's heart and mind. The second three to the believer's relationships with others. The final three are connected to the believer's conduct.

Love, joy, peace (v. 22). Love (*agape*) is key in the life of the Christian. It is also central to God's work in creation, the incarnation, the atonement, and salvation. The love God pours into the believer (Rom. 5:5) enables the Christian through the power of the Holy Spirit to love God and others with this same love.

Joy (*chara*) means more than just happiness. It is the inward experience produced by the grace of God that enables the believer through faith to celebrate life in Christ no matter the temporal, external conditions of life he or she may be experiencing.

Peace (*eirene*) is also not dependent upon temporal, outside experiences, and events. It is related to the Hebrew term *shalom*, which refers to an inward condition of wholeness and well-being. The believer has peace with God through Christ, which defies human understanding (John 14:27; Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:7). Both the joy and peace that come from the Holy Spirit are related to our permanent standing before God as His redeemed children, and the truth that no matter what happens in this life, nothing can separate us from God's love (Rom. 8:31-39), and we will spend eternity with Him in heaven.

Patience, kindness, goodness (v. 22). *Patience* (*makrothumia*) means that the believer has a long temper (as opposed to a short fuse). Unrestrained anger is the work of the flesh (v. 20), but those who walk by the Spirit are slow to anger (like God Himself, Ex. 34:6). *Kindness* (*chrestotes*) means being helpful and honest with others and treating them well. It overlaps in meaning with goodness. *Goodness* (*agathosune*) refers to the generous attitude believers are to have toward others. It involves acting in good ways toward others, even when they do not deserve it.

Faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (vv. 22-23). *Faithfulness* (*pistis*) means to be trustworthy and reliable. *Gentleness* (*prautes*) describes a person who has a submissive and teachable spirit in relation to God and expresses humility and consideration toward others. A person who has *self-control* (*egkrateia*) has mastery over his or her emotions, impulses, desires, and passions, be they positive or negative.

Crucified the flesh (v. 24). In Romans 6, Paul described how in Christ the believer has died to sin and been raised up to newness of life. In this process, the believer's old sin nature has been crucified with Christ, rendering sin powerless over the believer. However, making this a reality in the life of the believer is a gradual process, particularly given that the Christian remains in a sin-filled world full of temptations and ruled over by Satan. Paul therefore urged believers to no longer offer themselves to sin as weapons of unrighteousness but rather present themselves to God as weapons of righteousness. Jesus described this process as taking up one's cross daily and following Him (Matt. 16:24-26).

Keep in step with (v. 25). Those who live by the Spirit have an obligation also to *keep in step with the Spirit*. Drawn from an analogy in the military, this term (*stoicheo*) means "to advance in a line." Figuratively, it means to behave or live in accordance with a standard or rule. Paul was saying since the Holy Spirit gives us life, we should also allow Him to control how we live.

LIVE IT OUT



5 MINUTES

NOTES

GUIDE: Direct the group to page 43 of the PSG: Living out God's purpose depends on your walking by the Spirit. What will you do with that truth this week? Choose one of the following applications:

- **Assess your walk.** Examine your life for areas where you follow the flesh. Confess those sins, turn from them, and ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit.
- **Invest time.** Walking by the Spirit requires setting aside time for Him. Determine when and where you can meet God each day. Make it an unwavering habit to spend time with God every day.
- **Redirect your thoughts.** Walking in the Spirit means we "take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Begin the habit of relying on the Spirit, so that your thoughts are honoring to Christ. Memorize a helpful verse like Philippians 4:8.

WRAP IT UP

TRANSITION: Read or restate **The Point** for this session: **We live out our purpose as we are led and filled with the Spirit.**

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Use the "**Game**" option (page 55 of this Leader Guide) to allow the group an opportunity to review the fruit of the Spirit.

PRAY: Thank God for the way His Spirit helps us live out our purpose. Ask Him to give us the courage and strength to live boldly for Him.



SCAN ME

BIBLE
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EXTRA!

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ENGAGE

The Fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is a list of character traits displayed in those who walk with the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). From the list below, circle one or two attributes and take a few moments to pray that God would give you opportunities to grow in that trait this week.

LOVE

JOY

PEACE

PATIENCE

KINDNESS

GOODNESS

FAITHFULNESS

GENTLENESS

SELF-CONTROL

My Prayer:

NOTES

BONUS CONTENT

FRUIT ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance, bring an assortment of fruits to your group: apples, oranges, pears, and whatever else is currently in season. Pass out the fruit to your group members and encourage them to have a snack at the start of your gathering. As you eat, ask volunteers to share what they've learned about the fruit of the Spirit.

GAME ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Invite volunteers who want to play a game reviewing the fruit of the Spirit to join a circle of chairs. Using a piece of the fruit from earlier, toss the fruit to someone in the group. Whoever catches the fruit should shout out one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. Then they should toss the fruit to another person who will do likewise. When all the fruit of the Spirit has been named, the group can applaud. Then close in prayer.

1. Another aspect of the transformative nature of life in Christ is God's renewing of the believer's mind, which enables him or her to better discern the will of God (Rom. 12:2).
2. Noted in the PSG, this text was adapted from the commentary (see page 53).