

PURPOSE LIVED

THE POINT

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

THE PASSAGE

Galatians 5:16-26

LIFE CONNECTION

Often in society, the very wealthy seek to give greater meaning to their lives through good work and philanthropy. We applaud their generosity, but there's a greater good we do when we allow God to work through us. He equips and empowers us to live daily with a purpose that reaps eternal benefits.

BACKGROUND

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 the observance of special days—in order to be in right standing with God (Galatians 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 also Acts 15) and were to live the Christian life in freedom under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:13-26).

GETTING STARTED



5 MINUTES

DISCUSS: Give your group an opportunity to discuss **Question #1** on page 45 of the Daily Discipleship Guide (DDG): **What’s your most memorable “some assembly required” experience?**

RECAP (DDG, PAGE 46): Invite a volunteer to read **The Bible Meets Life** to introduce the session:

Imagine trying to put together a desk. After you assemble the first few pieces, you think you’ve got the hang of it. You discard the instructions and continue on until you come to the end, only to discover a few pieces left over. All that work and effort were wasted because your focus wasn’t in the right place. You still have a desk, but it’s not exactly right. In the same way, we might try to find meaning through doing all kinds of good. People give time, money, and resources to lots of causes, and while a measure of good might be accomplished, there’s still a greater good missed. We only find that greater good and live out our purpose when we’re led by and filled with the Spirit.

GUIDE: Direct attention to **The Point** on page 46 of the DDG. Invite the group to fill in the blank: **We live out our PURPOSE as we are led and filled with the Spirit.**

PRAY: Transition into the study by asking God to prepare us for the greater good He wants to work in and through us. Ask Him to equip and empower us to live with a purpose that reaps eternal benefits.

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.

GIVE BIBLICAL CONTEXT (DDG, PAGE 46): Galatians is unique among Paul's letters. First, unlike Ephesus, Colassae, or Corinth, Galatia is a region rather than a city. This letter was meant to be read in not just one church but around a group of churches. The book is also unique in its tone. Galatians doesn't contain Paul's typical expression of thanksgiving for the believers in the church; instead, he launched directly into a blistering rebuke of the Christians for abandoning the gospel he preached to them—that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Rather, the Galatians adopted a legalistic approach whereby they added other elements to their faith, believing this combination was necessary for salvation. In this call to return to the purity of faith, we can understand what life in the Spirit is like.

READ: Ask someone to read aloud Galatians 5:16-18 on page 46 of the DDG.

GUIDE: Direct your group's attention to statement 1 on page 46 of the DDG. Invite the group to fill in the blank: **Walking by the SPIRIT keeps us from fulfilling sinful desires.**

GUIDE: Use the commentary for verse 16 on the next page of this Leader Guide to discuss in more detail what is meant by walking "by the Spirit."

RECAP (DDG, PAGE 46): Though when we come to Christ, we're new creations, remnants of our sinful old self remain. This old self is what Paul called the "flesh," and he was well aware of the constant battle within every Christian. Just as the remnants of the flesh remain, so also are we now, in Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is constantly working to move us toward God's aim for us to be molded into the image of Christ. The challenge is, by faith, for us to walk by the Spirit daily.

DISCUSS Question #2: What does walking by the Spirit look like?

TRANSITION: In the next verses, we see that walking in the flesh leads to sinful behavior.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

Why is it sometimes difficult to do the right thing but easy to do the wrong thing?

GALATIANS 5:16-18 *Commentary*

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

Walk (v. 16). The Greek term literally means to physically walk, but it is also used 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. In Galatians, Paul described this as walking by the Spirit (v. 6), 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," Ephesians 4:22) to which they are enslaved, and they are spiritually dead. When a person repents and puts saving faith in Jesus, he or she is spiritually made alive, is permanently indwelt by the Spirit, and receives a new nature ("the new self," Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). Through the guidance and power of the Spirit, the believer is able to reject the **desire of the flesh**, so as not to return to living in sin, and is able to live according to the new nature through which the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-26).

While walking by the Spirit is done in the power and by the leading of the 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 and to live according to the new nature. Walking by the Spirit is the lifelong process of intentionally living as God would have us live.

Desire (v. 16). The word for "desire" indicates a passionate longing, craving, or lust. It can be neutral (the craving for one's favorite food) or positive (the desire of the righteous), but in this case it is an evil desire for the works of **the flesh**.

The flesh (v. 16). Can literally refer to the human body or a worldly perspective. In this context, the term refers to the fallen, sinful nature to which all people are enslaved before conversion, and which tempts believers to sin.

Opposed to each other (v. 17). The Holy Spirit and the flesh are opposed to each other because the Spirit is God and desires that the believer live a godly life while the flesh desires sin. Paul characterized this opposition as a struggle between the old self (sin nature) and "the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth" (Ephesians 4:22-24). Paul acknowledged that the Spirit and the flesh were waging a war within him (Romans 7:22-23; on the struggle in general see Galatians 5:13-16).

You don't do what you want (v. 17). As long as we are in this world, Christians 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 Spirit, we should strive to live a righteous life of obedience to God.

Led by the Spirit (v. 18). Indicates that the Spirit's leadership is ongoing in the believer's life. Before conversion, the life of the individual was dominated by the flesh (enslaved to sin, John 8:34; Romans 6:6), but now the believer is empowered and guided by the indwelling Spirit. The Spirit enables the Christian to live a life of freedom and obedience to God.

Under the law (v. 18). The law can never save anyone because its requirement is perfect obedience (James 2:10). However, because Christ perfectly fulfilled the law and at the moment of salvation God permanently exchanges the believer's sins for the perfect righteousness of Christ, the Christian is no longer under the law—its demands have been fully met by Jesus. The life the believer now lives is not done to earn salvation—salvation is a free gift from God, received by faith. Rather, the believer strives to live in obedience to God out of gratitude for what He has done and the desire to please Him in how he or she lives.

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 47 of the DDG.

GUIDE: Direct your group's attention to statement 2 on page 47 of the DDG. Invite the group to fill in the blank: **Walking in the FLESH leads to sinful behavior.**

GUIDE: Use the commentary on the next page of this Leader Guide to look more closely at the "works of the flesh" (v. 19) mentioned in this passage.

RECAP (DDG, PAGE 47): Every Christian is engaged in a moment-by-moment battle. We're sometimes more aware of that battle than at other times, but the battle is present, nevertheless. Every Christian, then, must choose which way to walk. If we allow ourselves to walk according to the flesh, we'll find ourselves involved in what A. W. Tozer called "the fine threads of the self-life." Though Paul's list in this passage isn't exhaustive, each one of these behaviors has "self" at the center. When we walk in the flesh, we'll seek to gratify ourselves with each step.

DISCUSS Question #3: What are the consequences of tolerating works of the flesh in our lives?

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): See the optional activity (on page 57 in this Leader Guide) to give your group an opportunity to contrast walking in the flesh with walking in the Spirit.

DISCUSS Question #4: How can we know whether we're being guided by the Holy Spirit or by our flesh?

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 sins characterize nonbelievers, those enslaved to sin. The 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.

Obvious (v. 19). The Greek word means “to be revealed” or “to be visible” in the sense of making something plain or apparent. The opposition of the works of the flesh to God and godly living is clear.

Sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity (v. 19). Three related yet distinct terms that describe sensuality of a sinful nature. “Sexual immorality” refers to all sinful sexual behavior. “Moral impurity” emphasizes the defilement of sexual sin and the resulting separation from God. “Promiscuity” refers to the unbridled lack of restraint as it relates to sexual sin.

Idolatry, sorcery (v. 20). Idolatry involves giving the worship due to God to the things He created. Sorcery involves the use of magic and trying to manipulate demonic powers rather than trusting in the Lord. The term can also be translated “witchcraft.”

Hatreds (v. 20). Shifting to relational sins, Paul listed eight words that describe the breakdown of interpersonal relationships (vv. 20-21). “Hatreds” refers to a deep-seated enmity directed against another and can have either God or other people as its object.

Strife (v. 20). Describes one who has a contemptuous temper that is focused on others.

Jealousy (v. 20). 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 is dependent on the context. In this context, it can be translated “fits of rage” and describes hostile verbal outbursts against others.

Selfish ambitions (v. 20). Describes those who through their words and activities seek to manipulate people and circumstances for personal gain.

Dissensions, factions (v. 20). “Dissensions” describes those who cultivate a sense of belonging to an elite party or faction. “Factions” 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 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).

Anything similar (v. 21). These words indicate that Paul’s list was by no means comprehensive.

Practice (v. 21). This is not a one-time occurrence or a mistaken slip into sin, but rather a life dominated by the influence of the old sin nature. Believers will still sin, but if any such sin becomes dominant, God will lovingly discipline His child so that he or she turns back to Him and away from such sin.

Will not inherit the kingdom of God (v. 21). Those whose lives are characterized by the works of the flesh demonstrate by their actions that they are not born again. Unless they repent and place their faith in Christ, they will not “inherit the kingdom of God.” The kingdom of God is His rule and reign in the believer’s life, with abundant life now and life in the presence of God for eternity.

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 47 of the DDG.

GUIDE: Direct your group's attention to statement 3 on page 47 of the DDG. Invite the group to fill in the blank: **Walking by the Spirit produces CHRISTLIKE character.**

RECAP (DDG, PAGE 47): God's will for every Christian is to be conformed to the image of Christ. This is an inside-out kind of growth. In Christ, our hearts have been changed. What's left is for our thoughts, feelings, and behavior to be brought in line with our inner reality. This is a lifelong process of growth. Just as a tree will produce fruit that displays the type of tree it is, so also will the Holy Spirit produce fruit in our lives in line with who we've become in Christ.

GUIDE: Use the commentary on the next page of this Leader Guide to discuss more fully the different aspects of the fruit of the Spirit.

LEADER PACK: In advance, make copies of **Pack Item 3, The Fruit of the Spirit** handout, and distribute them. Read the associated passages of Scripture together.

DISCUSS Question #5: How has the Holy Spirit helped you live like Jesus?

DO: Direct the group to the **Engage** activity on page 47 of the DDG (page 57 of this Leader Guide) to give them an opportunity to identify one attribute of the fruit of the Spirit they would like to grow in this week.

GALATIANS 5:22-26 *Commentary*

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

Fruit of the Spirit (v. 22). This is the godly behavior the Holy Spirit produces in the believer. 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 relate to the believer's relationships with others. The final three are connected to the believer's conduct.

Love, joy, peace (v. 22). "Love" 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 enables the Christian—through the power of the Holy Spirit—to love God and others with this same love.

"Joy" 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" is also not dependent on temporal, outside experiences, and events. It refers to an inward condition of wholeness and well-being. Both the joy and peace that come from the Holy Spirit are related to our permanent standing before God as His redeemed children. No matter what happens in this life, nothing can separate us from God's love, and we will spend eternity with Him in heaven.

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

Faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control

(vv. 22-23). "Faithfulness" means to be trustworthy and reliable. "Gentleness" 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" has mastery over his or her emotions, impulses, desires, and passions, be they positive or negative.

Law (v. 23). Through the power of the indwelling Spirit, believers are transformed so that they are able to live in accordance with God's law—not in an effort to earn salvation (we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone), but rather as a response of gratitude to God for what He has done for us and out of a desire to please God by living for Him.

Crucified the flesh (v. 24). 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. Paul urged believers to no longer offer themselves to sin as weapons of unrighteousness but rather present themselves to God as weapons of righteousness.

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

Conceited (v. 26). Describes one who is prideful, arrogant, or boastful, who seeks to elevate himself or herself above others. This could imply those who seek popularity, fame, and notoriety.

Provoking . . . envying (v. 26). Believers provoke or envy one another in many ways. They might have selfish rivalries, envy one another's spiritual gifts, and provoke others through empty arguments about unimportant matters. These are not characteristics in line with the fruit of the Spirit.

LIVE IT OUT



5 MINUTES

NOTES

ASK: What actions will you take in response to today's study?

GUIDE: Direct your group to review the three bulleted statements under **Live It Out** on page 48 of the DDG. Call on volunteers to share (1) which of these statements is something they want to pursue further, or (2) ways this study will transform how they pursue being led and filled by the Holy Spirit this week.

- **Reflect.** Read through the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23. In a journal or on a sheet of paper, record instances from the past year in which you can look back and see the Holy Spirit was working in your life to grow that fruit.
- **Encourage.** Seek out a friend for coffee and engage in a conversation about where you see the Spirit of God working right now in each other's lives.
- **Serve.** We're to keep in step with the Spirit of God. In what area of service might God be calling you to keep in step with Him? Contact a ministry where you feel led to contribute—inside your church or in your community—and ask about opportunities to serve.

WRAP IT UP

GUIDE: Invite each person to gather with two or three Christ-followers of the same gender this week for a deeper discussion, using **Talk It Out** (page 48 of the DDG) to guide their discussion. Encourage your group to spend time each day in God's Word with the **Daily Study** section (pages 49-54 of the DDG).

RECAP: Read or restate from page 46 of the DDG.

People give time, money, and resources to lots of causes, and while a measure of good might be accomplished, there's still a greater good missed. We only find that greater good and live out our purpose when we're led by and filled with the Spirit.

PRAY: Close your group time with prayer, thanking the Lord for the Holy Spirit who lives in us and leads and fills us, so that we may live out our purpose in life.



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EXTRA!

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BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra

ENGAGE

The fruit of the Spirit is a list of attributes displayed in those who walk with the Holy Spirit. From the list below, circle one attribute and take a few moments to pray that God will give you opportunities to grow in that characteristic this week.

Love	Joy	Peace	Patience	Kindness
Goodness	Faithfulness	Gentleness	Self-control	

NOTES

BONUS CONTENT

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance, gather two tear sheets and a couple of markers for each. Write “Walking in the flesh” at the top of one sheet and “Walking in the Spirit” at the top of the other. Hang them on opposite sides of your meeting room.

- Invite the group to list examples of walking in the flesh and walking in the Spirit on the appropriate sheets.
- After everyone has had an opportunity to contribute, discuss as a group the results of walking in the flesh and walking in the Spirit.