

Purpose Lived



THE POINT

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

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 is a greater good we do when we allow God Himself to empower us and work through us. He equips and empowers us to live daily with a purpose that reaps eternal benefits.

THE PASSAGE

Galatians 5:16-26

THE SETTING

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).

GETTING STARTED



5 MINUTES

DISCUSS: Draw attention to the question on **PSG, page 51** and ask
Question 1: What's something people in your hometown love to brag about?

GUIDE: Refer the group to "**The Bible Meets Life**" (**PSG, page 51**) and the story of discovering oil in Beaumont, Texas, in 1901.

SAY: Unfortunately, believers can live their lives in a similar way: we have the Spirit, yet we fail to realize the tremendous power and potential He can bring into our lives.

GUIDE: Introduce **The Point** on **PSG, page 51: We live out our purpose as we are led and filled with the Spirit.**

OPTIONAL INTRODUCTION: Refer to "Life Connection" on page 48 for an alternate introduction to the study.

PRAY: Begin the session with prayer. Ask God to impress the group with the necessity of walking by the Spirit. Ask Him to develop in each believer the fruit of the Spirit.

NOTES

STUDY THE BIBLE



10 MINUTES

Digging Deeper
Refer the group to
Digging Deeper,
"Walk By the Spirit"
(PSG, p. 53).

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

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.

SUMMARIZE: Before reading the verses, refer to "The Setting" on page 48 to establish the context of the biblical passage.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read Galatians 5:16-18

READ: Share the **Connection to The Point:** Walking by the Spirit keeps us from fulfilling sinful desires.

GUIDE: Refer the group to **PSG, pages 52–53** and use the author's comments to explain the concept of walking by the Spirit.

Paul used the word walk to describe what it means to be a Christian. The Christian life is a journey. As we walk through life, Christ walks with us. As we encounter challenges along the way, His Holy Spirit strengthens us to stand strong. It's a journey toward Christlikeness that will only end one day when we stand face-to-face before God Himself.

Instead of walking in accordance with a bunch of dos and don'ts, we're to "walk by the Spirit." The Spirit equips us and empowers us to live in full obedience to God.

Let me state this plainly and bluntly: the only way any of us can do what is right is when we walk by the Spirit. Relying on any aspect of ourselves—the flesh—won't cut it. In fact, the flesh will always pull us in the opposite direction.

SUMMARIZE: Refer to the **Bible Commentary** to explain these key words from vv. 16-18. Use them to contrast the Spirit with the flesh. Highlight the following:

By the Spirit (v. 16).

The flesh (v. 16).

Opposed to each other (v. 17).

Led by the Spirit (v. 18).

DISCUSS: Question 2: How can we know whether we're being guided by the Holy Spirit or by our flesh?

TRANSITION: Believers have been freed from the penalty and power of sin, but sin isn't going to roll over and play dead.

Galatians 5:16-18 Commentary

Walk (v. 16). The Greek term for *walk* (*peripateo*) 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. 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). 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 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 and choosing to walk (live) according to the new nature (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). It is the process that begins after a person is saved. Walking by the Spirit is intentionally living as God would have us live.¹

Desire (v. 16). The word for *desire* (*epithumia*) indicates a passionate longing, a 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). *The flesh* (*sarx*) can refer to the human body (Luke 24:39) or a worldly perspective (2 Cor. 5:16). In this context the term refers to the fallen, sinful nature to which all people are enslaved before conversion (Rom. 6:6-7).

Opposed to each other (v. 17). The Holy Spirit and the flesh are opposed to each other because the Spirit 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 (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9-10). Paul acknowledged that the Spirit and the flesh were waging a war within him (Rom. 7:22-23; on the struggle, see Gal. 5:13-16).

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. Before conversion, the life of the individual was dominated by the flesh (enslaved to sin, John 8:34; Rom. 6:6). The believer is empowered and guided by the indwelling Holy Spirit who enables the Christian to live a life of obedience to God (Rom. 6; Gal. 5:13-14).

Under the law (v. 18). 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 (1 Cor. 1:30-31; 2 Cor. 5:21), the Christian is no longer under the law—its demands have been fully met by Jesus.

STUDY THE BIBLE



10 MINUTES

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: Enlist a volunteer to read Galatians 5:19-21

READ: Share the **Connection to The Point:** Walking in the flesh leads to sinful behavior.

RECAP: Refer the group to **PSG, pages 54–56** and recap the four groups of works of the flesh.

Sexual sins. These include “sexual immorality, moral impurity, [and] promiscuity.” Sexual immorality is a general term referring to any illicit sexual activity. Paul used the three terms together to sum up the whole realm of sexual sins from premarital sex to adultery to pornography to lustful thoughts.

Spiritual infidelity. Idolatry involved the worship of “gods” made by human hands. Idolatry occurs when we place anything before Christ.

Relational sins. These are sins seen in our relationships: “hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger.” Each of these sins creates tension with others, erects barriers between people, and destroys relationships.

Sins of decadence. Paul warned against “drunkenness” and “carousing.” Carousing is mentioned three times in the New Testament (See also Rom. 13:13; 1 Peter 4:3). Each time it is linked to drunkenness and could be identified with wild parties. A lifestyle of indulgence, including drinking and boisterous behavior, is inconsistent with the life of a Christian.

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

SUMMARIZE: Refer to the **Bible Commentary** to explain these key words from vv. 19-21 to emphasize the serious nature of the “practice” of sin.

Works of the flesh (v. 19).

Practice (v. 21).

Will not inherit the kingdom of God (v. 21).

TRANSITION: Thankfully, God has equipped believers with the One resource that can enable us to say “no” to sin.

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

Galatians 5:19-21 Commentary

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*. 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 (*phaneros*) means “to be revealed” or “to be visible” making something plain or apparent. The works of the flesh’s opposition to God and godly living is clear.

Sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity (v. 19). These words describe the 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*) involves the use of magic and trying to manipulate demonic powers rather than trusting in the Lord. The term can also be translated “witchcraft.” 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). *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*) refers to a negative emotion one has over someone else’s success or achievements. It describes a rivalry characterized by envy and malice.

Outbursts of anger (v. 20). (*thumos*) In this context it could be translated “fits of rage” and describes hostile verbal outbursts against others.

Selfish ambitions (v. 20). (*eritheia*) In Greek politics, used to describe those seeking office, 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). (*hairesis*) 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). (*phthonos*) 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) associated with pagan worship that included both drunkenness and sexual misconduct.

Anything similar (v. 21). These words indicate that Paul’s list of the sins of the flesh wasn’t comprehensive. Believers, led by the Holy Spirit, should be able to discern other works of the flesh.

Practice (v. 21). (*prasso*) Refers to someone living under the power of the flesh, who repeatedly or habitually engages in the works of the flesh. This is not a one-time occurrence or a mistaken slip into sin, but a life dominated by the sin nature.

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.

STUDY THE BIBLE



15 MINUTES

LEADER PACK:

Distribute **Item 3: Fruit of the Spirit** handout. Review the Bible verses that support the need for the fruit of the Spirit to be on full display in our lives.



Alternate Question

What are some ways you crucify the flesh as you walk in the Spirit?

Optional Activity

See Bonus Content on page 57. Use this activity to describe what it looks like to use something for the opposite purpose of what it was created to be used for.

Galatians 5:22-26

- 22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, 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: Enlist a volunteer to read Galatians 5:22-26.

READ: Share the **Connection to The Point:** Walking by the Spirit produces Christlike character.

GUIDE: Refer the group to **PSG, page 57** and use the author's comments to highlight the concept of fruit in association with the Spirit.

Paul followed his list of fleshly traits with a list of characteristics of the one who walks by the Spirit. Paul identified these traits as “fruit,” which is such an apt description in light of Jesus’s description of our relationship with Him as the vine and the branches. “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me” (John 15:5).

The fruit Paul described in these verses is fruit that the Spirit produces as we cling to Him. Just as the branches get their sustenance from the vine, we look to Christ, walk by His Spirit, and the fruit listed here is the result.

SUMMARIZE: Refer to the **Bible Commentary** to explain key words from vv. 22-26. Use them to provide clarity for the fruit of the Spirit.

DISCUSS: **Question 4: What does walking by the Spirit look like?**

DISCUSS: **Question 5: What has helped you maintain a Spirit-directed lifestyle?**

ENGAGE: Invite the group to complete the Engage activity (**PSG, p. 58**).

Galatians 5:22-26 Commentary

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).

Love, joy, peace (v. 22). The first three characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit are related to the believer's heart and mind. **Love** (*agape*) is key in the life of the Christian. 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*) 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 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). The second three characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit are related to the believer's relationships with others. **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. **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). The final three characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit are connected to the believer's conduct. **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.

Law (v. 23). The fruit of the Spirit are in keeping with *the law*. Through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, believers are transformed so that they are able to live in accordance with God's law—with 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). 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. (Matt. 16:24-26).

Keep in step with (v. 25). 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.

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

Provoking . . . envying (v. 26). Believers might experience rivalries between others within the church body. They might envy one another's spiritual gifts.



5 MINUTES

LIVE IT OUT

REVIEW: **Live It Out (PSG, page 59).** Encourage the group to follow through this week with at least one of the applications.

Living out God's purpose depends on your walking by the Spirit. What will you do with that truth this week?

- **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. Commit to following Christ and letting His Spirit work His godly character in you.*
- **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.** *Begin the habit of relying on the Spirit, so that your thoughts are honoring to Christ. Toward this end, memorize Philippians 4:8: "Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things."*

Wrap It Up

GUIDE: Emphasize **The Point: We live out our purpose as we are led and filled with the Spirit.**

GUIDE: Remind the group that walking by the Spirit is the only way to live a life pleasing to God. It not only keeps us far from sin, but also brings us near to the blessings of God.

PRAY: Lord, forgive us for the times we have allowed the flesh to be in control. Remind us that we have crucified the flesh in order to live by Your Spirit. During temptation, give us strength to keep in step with the Spirit.



SCAN ME

**BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE.**

EXTRA!

Free additional ideas for your group are available at
BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra

Engage

The fruit of the Spirit is a list of character traits displayed in those who walk with the Holy Spirit. From the list below, mark one attribute 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

Bonus Content (Optional)

Optional Activity: Bring an object with a clear purpose (baseball bat, toaster, math protractor, tub of cleaning wipes), and pass the item around. Each participant should brainstorm a way of using that item for any purpose **OTHER** than the obvious purpose. Afterward, point out that God desires for us to walk in the Spirit, for the purposes He's created. If we are walking in the flesh, we are living like the object, going through life doing everything except the things we are made to do.

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).