

# Practicing the Christian Life: Led by the Spirit

**Galatians 5:16-26**

7/16/23

## Discussion Questions

### Preparation

Share your efforts in trying to "*crucifying the sinful nature with its cravings/passions.*" (vs. 24)

### Passage:

***16** So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. **17** The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. **18** But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.*

***19** When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, **20** idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, **21** envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

***22** But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!*

***24** Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. **25** Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. **26** Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another. (vss. 16-26)*

1. Why is the fruit of the Spirit necessary in the life of a Christian? Can we develop the first, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of the fruit and pass over the ones that do not fit our temperaments? Why or why not?
2. Look at the list of the fruit of the Spirit. Which ones do you feel you excel in, the fruit is ripe and juicy, and which ones do you struggle with, the fruit is small and immature?

If your group has been together for a while you probably know each other pretty well. Take each person one at a time and have the group identify the fruit they see developed in the person's life. Perhaps hold this off until the end and use it to end your time together.

(This can be a very moving experience. Out of false humility we tend to downplay our virtues while, out of a critical spirit, we tend to accentuate our vices and

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shortcomings. As a result we find it hard to see the good fruit that is in our lives. Listen to what the people in your group see in you and receive it without comment other than to say: "Thank you!")

3. Jesus said, "By their fruit you will know them." Matthew 12:33 By this measure, are you a Christian?
4. What is the "sinful nature" or in the old NIV version, "the flesh." What does it desire? How hard is it to fight against the sinful nature? How do you experience this war between the Spirit of God and "the flesh?"
5. What do people crave or need and how does the sinful nature take those needs and turn them into unhealthy passions, drives or cravings – things we feel we must have in order to experience satisfaction in life.
6. Looking at the list of the "works of the flesh" which one(s) have you had a hard time taming? How has/have it/they affected your life?
7. What have you tried to do to get rid of the works of the flesh? Has it worked? Now that you heard the message, what can you do to change how you approach getting rid of these unhealthy behaviors and responses?
8. Paul says: "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there." (vs. 24) What does he mean by this? If we are still struggling with various sins does it mean we aren't Christians? I mean, he says if you are a believer you already have crucified the sinful nature!
9. Verses 16 & 18 are parallel verses. Put them together and Paul says that in order to stop doing what the sinful nature craves we have to get out from under the law. How does that happen?

"So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves." (vs. 16)

"But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses." (vs. 18)

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10. Why do you obey God? To gain something from him like his favor or an answer to a prayer or to avoid something like a negative outcome? How easy is it to fall into the habit of not doing something out of fear of the consequences instead of obeying God out of love for him?

11. Share an example of doing something to gain or avoid gaining something from your spouse and/or kids and give an example of doing something for a loved one simply because you loved them.

After you do, reflect on this question: *"How hard is it to love God through obedience?"*

12. How harmful is it to our relationships when we do nice things for other from a selfish motivation? Give an example. It can be especially harmful to kids. It's too easy as parents to bribe our kids into obedience or use anger to knock them into submission.

13. What difference does it make in our lives to know that we belong to God? Take some time to brainstorm the implications of this truth.

14. Pastor Richard shared an example of how we can allow belonging to God to shape our lives instead of doing something that is according to God's will out of fear that if we don't something bad will happen to us. We fear the consequences of our choices rather than "fear God." Share an story from your life where you were able to do the same.

15. Reflect on this verse in light of the sermon: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."* Proverbs 9:10