

Galatians

Lesson 10 Chapter 5:16-26

Leader Guide

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Lesson 10
Life by the Spirit
Galatians 5:16-26

So I say, live by the Spirit (*Galatians 5:16*)

Prayers

Introduction

As we near the conclusion of Galatians, Paul makes his most important point in our Christian walk; we live by the Spirit in faith and love. The work of the Spirit is manifold. The Holy Spirit is God's Spirit abiding in us to bring us righteousness. The Spirit guides, comforts, intercedes, convicts, renews and keeps us securely in Christ. Yet, even with all these blessings, our experience tells us that life by the Spirit can be challenging. The world has corrupted our minds, so we do not always choose what is good and right. Paul calls this corruption our sinful nature, and he knew the struggle. In Romans 7:15 he confessed, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." Even though we struggle with sin, God has taken nothing to chance for our spiritual security. We are redeemed, justified, and sanctified by Christ, so we are no longer under sin's condemnation. God gives His Spirit to reveal his love for us and the plans he made before creation for us to be his children so that we will be with him forever.

As we live by the Spirit, the Spirit is at work, convicting us of our sins and renewing our minds. We work with the Spirit as we set our minds on true, honorable, just, pure, and gracious thoughts (Philippians 4:8) rather than on thoughts that lead us to sin and temptation.

Read Galatians 5:16-26

Gal 5:16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Gal 5:17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Gal 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

Gal 5:19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

Gal 5:20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions

Gal 5:21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Gal 5:23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Gal 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Gal 5:25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Gal 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

1. How does Paul's discussion of the Spirit relate to the Galatians issue?

Living our life guided by the Holy Spirit through faith and love is the alternative to seeking righteousness and justification through strict obedience to the law.

2. Paul contrasts the sinful nature with living by the Spirit. What are the acts of the sinful nature (verses 19-21)?

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. (Galatians 5:19-21)

3. Which sins, if any, do Christians frequently tolerate on Paul's list in verses 19-21?

Answers will vary, but Paul distinguishes between a sinful lifestyle and committing a sin. Jesus' teaching in the sermon on the mount showed that we sin in our thoughts and actions, so we are guilty of most of these sins.

4. As believers, we might identify with some of the sins on Paul's list. Does Paul mean these sins are unforgivable when he warns that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Paul's warning includes an important phrase, "those who live like this" will not inherit God's kingdom. Christians struggle with all manner of sins and are called to repentance. Some believers experience miraculous healing when they confess their sinful addictions and seek repentance at the foot of the cross. Others find they continue to struggle and repeatedly need to ask for God's mercy and forgiveness as the Holy Spirit transforms their thinking. The Holy Spirit will not let us make peace with sin but will always lead us to repentance and remind us of the assurance we have in Christ; we are free from sin's condemnation, and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39).

5. What practical actions do you take to avoid temptations and sin?

- **We acknowledge that spiritual transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit, and we cannot change ourselves. Change begins with daily prayer, asking the Spirit for renewal and for God to strengthen us and keep us from temptation.**

- **Sin thrives in secrecy, so we work and live with open doors in areas where others can look in on us.**
 - **Put something good in our minds, so we do not dwell on what tempts us. These may be songs, prayers, reading scripture, or, as Paul writes, anything noble, right and pure. We also care for our minds by exercising creativity with the gifts God has given us, sewing, painting, writing, gardening, building, woodworking – all manner of creativity.**
 - **We take care of our bodies with exercise and eating well, avoiding excessive alcohol.**
 - **We understand our habits that lead to sin and choose our friends and activities wisely to avoid the temptation of old habits.**
 - **When all else fails, run like Joseph and flee from a tempting environment.**
6. In verses 22-23, Paul writes that the fruit of living by the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. In Ephesians 5:9, Paul adds goodness, righteousness, truth, and seeking what pleases the Lord. Discuss a time you were conscious of the Holy Spirit leading you through a stressful time with patience and self-control rather than feeling anger or anxiety.

Discussion will vary.

7. One of the works of the Holy is to renew our minds (Romans 12:2). We cannot change our Spirit, that is the work of the Holy Spirit, but we are not passive in spiritual growth. What are things we do to foster spiritual growth and maturity?

Spiritual transformation of our mind and Spirit is the work of the Holy Spirit. Just as we do not come to faith without God's revelation through the Spirit, neither can we transform our Spirit without the work of the Spirit. We should not think we are passive in spiritual transformation; we actively expose our minds to what is good. These renewing actions are sometimes referred to as spiritual disciplines. They include scripture reading and meditation, prayer, service and charity, and living with joy and gratitude for our moments of life.

8. In verse 3:8, Peter tells Christians to be self-controlled and alert. How do we live self-controlled lives?

Opinions will vary on this question. Three views need to be raised. The first is that our ability to live perfectly self-controlled lives is impossible in our strength. We can resist temptations for a while by our own strength and will, but we will not be able to sustain it. The second aspect of self-control is acknowledging our spiritual battle is only won through the power of the Holy Spirit. We need to look for his power and guidance daily, sometimes moment by moment. Another aspect of self-control is our need for spiritual transformation. Through the Spirit's guidance, we use good judgment, avoid situations that tempt us, pray, and fill our minds with good, excellent, and praiseworthy things (Philippians 4:8).

9. Paul writes that our sinful nature has been crucified through our unity with Christ and his indwelling Spirit. Does this mean we will not sin?

This is a difficult question and one that every Christian struggles with. The apostle Paul spoke for us when he expressed his frustration with sin by saying, “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Romans 7:15). We accept our spiritual rebirth and the indwelling Holy Spirit by faith. Still, our minds have been profoundly corrupted by what we have seen and experienced in the world. We have learned sinful patterns of behavior and thinking that need to be changed. The Holy Spirit is transforming our minds, convicting us of sin to bring us to repentance, and keeping us in union with Christ so we can take on his character in increasing measure. We are not passive in this transformation. Paul writes in Philippians 4:8, “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” We are not passive in spiritual transformation; we actively expose our minds to what is good. These renewing actions are sometimes referred to as spiritual disciplines. They include scripture reading and meditation, prayer, service and charity, and living with joy and gratitude for our moments of life.

10. In his letter to the Romans, Paul includes a similar discussion to Galatians 5:15-26, contrasting living by our sinful nature to life in the Spirit. Read Romans 8:1-17 and discuss what it means to live by the Spirit.

Ro 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

Ro 8:2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Ro 8:3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,

Ro 8:4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

Ro 8:5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

Ro 8:6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;

Ro 8:7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Ro 8:8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Ro 8:9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

Ro 8:10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your Spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Ro 8:11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Ro 8:12 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.

Ro 8:13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you *put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,*

Ro 8:14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Ro 8:15 For you did not receive a *spirit that makes you a slave again to fear*, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba, Father.*”

Ro 8:16 The Spirit himself testifies with our Spirit that we are God's children.

Ro 8:17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs —heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

- a. Why is there no condemnation for sin for those in Christ Jesus and under the law of the Spirit? (Romans 1-4)

There is no condemnation for those in Christ because Christ was a sin offering to God for us and fully met the requirements of the law.

- b. In verse 8:5, Paul writes that those who live by the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires and then gives some illustrations of what the Spirit desires. What does the Spirit desire in the following verses?

Verse 8:6 **A mind of life and peace**

Verse 8:9-10 **Christ living in us, giving us a spirit of righteousness**

Verse 8:11 **New life, life eternal**

Verse 8:13 **To stop misdeeds of the body**

Verse 8:14-15 **To be sons of God and to have an intimate relationship with God as our Father.**

Verses 8-16-17 **To be God’s children with an eternal inheritance and share in his sufferings and glory**

- c. How would you summarize what the Holy Spirit desires for you?

In short, the Holy Spirit desires what is best for us and others.

Closing Prayer