

▶ GLENSTONE CHAPEL ◀  
**Community Group Bible Study Guide**

**Passage: Galatians 5:16-26**

**For use June 1-7, 2008**

**QUESTIONS TO USE IN GROUP  
OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY**

**LAUNCHING** <sup>1</sup> [5-10 minutes]

1. "What grows in your garden without help? With your help?"<sup>2</sup>
2. Which of the following foods would be most tempting for you? Check (✓) one or two; share with the group, as you have opportunity.  
 A. Boston Cream Pie  
 B. Southern Bar-B-Q  
 C. The ultimate pizza.  
 D. Ice cream in any form.  
 E. T-bone steak, baked potatoes, and salad.  
 F. Lobster, shrimp, or other seafood.  
 G. A Philly cheese-steak.  
 H. Krispy Kreme donuts.  
 I. Fried chicken.  
 J. Your temptation food: \_\_\_\_\_

**UNDERSTANDING** <sup>3</sup> [15-25 minutes]

1. Read the passage aloud. Possibly use a version other than *NIV*. Before reading, ask the group to listen for the "alternatives for life" which Paul sets before the Galatians.
2. As a group, compose a *job description* for the Holy Spirit from this passage. Use both direct statements and inferences.
3. Discover how the "acts of the sinful nature" (vss. 19-21) might be linked, categorized and interrelated.<sup>4</sup>
4. "What does Paul mean by 'live by. . .', 'led by. . .', and 'keeping in step with' the Spirit (vss. 16, 18,25)? If we are made alive by the Spirit, why do we still struggle with sin?"<sup>5</sup>
5. As a group, reflect on the meaning of each dimension of the Spirit's fruit in a believer's life.
6. What, in practical terms, does *crucifying the sinful nature* mean? (vs. 24)
7. What was Paul's purpose when he added verse 26 to this passage on a Spirit-directed life?

**REFLECTING** <sup>6</sup> [10-15 minutes]

<sup>1</sup>Choose a question to steer thinking into the passage.; **note**, this is NOT an "ice-breaker."

<sup>2</sup>*1 John/Galatians*, Serendipity House, page 58.

<sup>3</sup>Possible questions to discover the meaning of Galatians 5:1-15.

<sup>4</sup>LEADER: Use #7 on page 2 as a last resort.

<sup>5</sup>*1 John/Galatians*, Serendipity House, page 58

<sup>6</sup>Choose one or two questions to make use of truths from Galatians 5:1-15 in daily life.

1. As you look back on your pilgrimage with God through life, what has caused you distress as you have sought to follow Christ's path? Check (✓) any that seem to fit you; share with the group as you wish.  
 A. "I was taught false doctrine."  
 B. "I sought exotic spiritual experiences and didn't find them."  
 C. "I get 'high' on Sunday 'worship' but seem to slip into spiritual lethargy during the week."  
 D. "I thought God lifted me up while at youth retreat or camp but back home I slid right back into the muck."  
 E. "I wanted to become a pastor/missionary, but it never worked out and here I am."  
 F. "My decision for Christ as a child faded away during my adolescent years."  
 G. "I made a bad decision(s) that derailed me."  
 H. "My obsession with \_\_\_\_\_ allows my sinful nature to express itself." [NOTE: not necessary to state the issue.]  
 I. "When I saw my spiritual leaders take a tumble, I kind of gave up, saying, 'What's the use, anyhow?'"  
 J. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. "How can you and the Spirit grow [spiritual fruit] and kill [sinful inclinations and behavior]?"<sup>7</sup>

3. Conclude your study in a **unison prayer** as follows:

I want a principle within of jealous, godly fear,  
A sensibility of sin, a pain to feel it near.  
I want the first approach to feel of pride or fond desire,  
To catch the wandering of my will, and quench the kindling fire.  
That I from Thee no more may part, no more Thy goodness grieve.  
The filial awe, the supple heart, the tender conscience give.  
Quick as the apple of the eye, O God, my conscience make.  
Awake my soul when sin is nigh, and keep it still awake.  
O may the least omission pain my well-instructed soul.  
And drive me to the blood again, which makes the wounded whole.<sup>8</sup>

**FURTHER REFLECTION (on your own)**

"We must abandon sin, having nothing to do with it in any way whatsoever. Sin belongs to hell and to the devil. I, as a child of God, belong to heaven and to God. It is not a question of giving up sin, but of giving up my right to myself, my natural independence, and my self-will. This is where the battle has to be fought."<sup>9</sup>

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**FOR PERSONAL PREPARATION**

<sup>7</sup>*1 John/Galatians*, Serendipity House, page 58.

<sup>8</sup>A hymn by Charles Wesley, *I Want a Principle Within*.

<sup>9</sup>*My Utmost for His Highest*, by Oswald Chambers, Dec. 9.

## Passage: Galatians 5:16-26

**1. To think about:** "There remains for Paul the task of applying his gospel in practical ways for the enabling of the Galatians to foster spirituality in their Christian lives."<sup>10</sup>

**2. Possible titles:** • Life by the Spirit<sup>11</sup>

- Individual Practice of Freedom<sup>12</sup>
- The Spirituality of Paul's Gospel<sup>13</sup>
- God's Spirit and Our Own Desires<sup>14</sup>

• Write your own! \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Who's who?** Paul explains to the Galatians how to live a life pleasing to God.

• **Paul.** Urges the Galatians to pattern their lives upon God's Spirit, to avoid sin's pitfalls and to discover positive results from the Spirits working in them.

• **Galatians.** Normal human beings; torn between the "desires of the sinful nature" and life in the Spirit; unaware that Holy Spirit's control is the "law" to which they now need to submit

• **The Holy Spirit.** Available to lead believers into paths of holy living and empower them accordingly.

**4. "So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature."** (vs. 16)

• This is "... a promise rather than a command."<sup>15</sup>

• "... Paul now warns about losing freedom by submitting to sinful desires." To live by the Spirit, says Paul, "... let the way you live, your conduct, be directed by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit, not the Law, Who will bring about a moral lifestyle."<sup>16</sup>

• "The problem is not with God's moral standards but with the sinful nature of humanity. However, the Holy Spirit enables believers to carry out His holy standards, as summarized in the Ten Commandments. Thus, being 'guided by the Spirit' means being able to obey the spirit of the Ten Commandments ('the Law'). The Holy Spirit gives a believer powerful new freedoms to be the person God originally intended."<sup>17</sup>

**5. "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."** (vs. 17)

• "According to Scripture there is a constant warfare between the flesh and the Spirit in the lives of God's children, and even the best of them are still striving for perfection. . . . the struggle characterizes all the children of God."<sup>18</sup>

• The struggle of the Christian is "... a tension within the believer's own personal experience-- an opposition between 'flesh' and Spirit. . . . a tension between the will to do what is right and the fulfillment of what is desired."<sup>19</sup>

• Sanctification<sup>20</sup> "... is a work of God in which believers cooperate. . . . man [sic] must be active in avoiding the pitfalls of life."<sup>21</sup>

• "Sin does not consist exclusively in overt acts. The sinful state is the basis of the sinful habits, and these manifest themselves in sinful deeds. . . . sin may be defined as lack of conformity to the moral law of God, either in act, disposition, or state."<sup>22</sup>

**6. "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law."** (vs. 18)

• "To live under the 'control' of the Law is to live under the crushing expectation of having to fulfill God's moral standards through one's own human ability. People who try to live that way are likely to end up in misery, because sooner or later they are bound to fail (Rom. 7:7-24). Rather than experiencing the joy of a clean conscience, they feel enslaved to legalism and guilt."<sup>23</sup>

• "To be led by the Spirit enables a person to resist sinful desire. To be under law, however, gives a person no protection at all against such inner cravings."<sup>24</sup>

**7. "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; (vs. 19) idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions (vs. 20) and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like."** (vs. 21a)

• Anyone who looks at this list honestly realizes that these are typical character defects afflicting humankind.

• "This list of vices is not meant to be exhaustive . . . lying or pride are not present at all, but would clearly fit under the category of things proscribed."<sup>25</sup>

• Four Categories: Sexual sins (3); "Gospel opposites" (2); Vices of attitude and spirit (8); Sins of excess (2).<sup>26</sup>

• These verses "... illustrate specifically the sort of lifestyle that emerges when the *flesh* (sinful nature) is allowed its sway."<sup>27</sup>

• **Sexual immorality** (immoral ways<sup>28</sup>): Fornication, adultery, prostitution, wantonness.

• **Impurity** (filthy thoughts). Pornography, sexual or romantic fantasies (e.g., most TV sitcoms, soap operas).

• **Debauchery** (shameful deeds). "... all unchastity, in thought, word, or action; [perhaps] unnatural lusts. . . ."<sup>29</sup>

• **Idolatry.**

• **Witchcraft.** "... doing honor to Satan . . . conjuration, soothsaying, necromancy, and all kind of magic are included and condemned hereby. . . ."

• **Hatred.** "internal hatred of any man's person"

• **Discord** (hard to get along with). Fighting and quarreling.

• **Jealousy.**

<sup>20</sup> "... that gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which He delivers the justified sinner from the pollution of sin, renews his whole nature in the image of God, and enables him to perform good works." *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 532.

<sup>21</sup> *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 534.

<sup>22</sup> *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 233.

<sup>23</sup> *Word in Life Bible*, page 1839.

<sup>24</sup> *John/Galatians*, Serendipity House, page 59.

<sup>25</sup> *Galatians* by David K. Huttar, page 150.

<sup>26</sup> *Galatians* by David K. Huttar, page 150

<sup>27</sup> *John/Galatians*, Serendipity House, page 59.

<sup>28</sup> *Word in Life Bible*, page 1840.

<sup>29</sup> *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, by John Gill.

<sup>10</sup> *Galatians, The Gospel According to Paul*, by David K. Huttar, page 148,

<sup>11</sup> *John/Galatians*, Serendipity House, page 58.

<sup>12</sup> *The New Testament*, by Merrill C. Tenney, page 285.

<sup>13</sup> *Galatians* by David K. Huttar, page 147.

<sup>14</sup> *Word in Life Bible*, page 1840.

<sup>15</sup> *Galatians* by David K. Huttar, page 148.

<sup>16</sup> *John/Galatians*, Serendipity House, page 59.

<sup>17</sup> *Word in Life Bible*, page 1839.

<sup>18</sup> *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 540.

<sup>19</sup> *Galatians* by David K. Huttar, page 149.

- **Fits of rage** (angry). "violent emotions of the mind, moving to revenge, and seeking the hurt and mischief of others"
- **Selfish ambition.**
- **Dissensions** (arguing,).
- **Factions** (causing trouble)..
- **Envy.** . . . grieving at the good of others, that any should be in an equal, or in a better condition than themselves. . . ."
- **Drunkenness.**
- **Orgies** (wild parties).

**8. ". . . those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."** (vs. 21b)

- ". . . it is someone who persistently lives the kind of life characterized by such acts that is in danger of God's eternal judgment."<sup>30</sup>
- God's kingdom ". . . is both present and future. It is on one hand the present, ever developing, spiritual reality in the hearts and lives of men. . . . On the other hand it is also a future hope, an eschatological reality. . . ."<sup>31</sup>

**9. "But the fruit of the Spirit is. . . ."** (vs. 22a)

- ". . . those traits which characterize the child of God. Again, the list is representative and not exhaustive."<sup>32</sup>
- "The supernatural work of God . . . [manifests] in Christian virtues as the work of the Spirit."<sup>33</sup>
- "If your faith is in Christ, you are a new person. The old habits and character traits that marked your life before Christ are passing away. He is making you entirely new. Paul paints several pictures to show what it looks like to be a new person in Christ."<sup>34</sup> Compare other New Testament passages which describe "the traits of new creations in Christ": 1 Cor. 13:3-8; Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:12-16.
- "Paul intends all of these qualities to exist, to some extent at least, in every believer. . . ."<sup>35</sup>

**10. ". . . love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness** (vs 22), **gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."** (vs. 23)

- **Love:** ". . . self-giving, active benevolence...."<sup>36</sup> In some ways, love embraces many of the others in the list.<sup>37</sup>
- **Joy:** Joy is "a delight in the Lord Himself . . . delight in the gifts of God . . . there is very much for which to be joyful."<sup>38</sup>
- **Peace:** "the presence of that which brings wholeness and well-being"<sup>39</sup> ". . . a peace that can exist in the presence of difficulty."<sup>40</sup>
- **Patience:**
- **Kindness:** A gentle and sweet response.
- **Goodness:**
- **Faithfulness:** Trustworthy, steadfast. Fidelity to God and His people.<sup>41</sup>

- **Gentleness:**
- **Self-control:** "This is control of one's sensual passions, rather than control of one's anger (as in gentleness)."<sup>42</sup>

**11. "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires."** (vs. 24)

- One part of sanctification is ". . . mortification of the old man, the body of sin. . . . that act of God whereby the pollution and corruption of human nature that results from sin is gradually removed. . . . The old man is human nature in so far as it is controlled by sin."<sup>43</sup>
- By means of the cross, ". . . a person also dies to the power of their sinful nature. . . . not done *to* the Christian but *by* the Christian."<sup>44</sup>
- Sanctification ". . . affects the whole man . . . [including] the passions."<sup>45</sup>

**12. "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."** (vs. 25)

- ". . . the death of the sinful nature is replaced by the life of the Spirit."<sup>46</sup>
- "The first step toward victory in the Christian's struggle with the flesh is the recognition . . . that a decisive break with the sinful nature took place at the moment of conversion. At that time, in the believer's identification with Christ in His death and resurrection, there was . . . a crucifixion of the flesh. The struggle may go on, but the believer ought never to forget the fact that implied in the act of coming to Christ for salvation is an act of repentance, of turning one's back on sin and the sinful nature."<sup>47</sup>

**13. "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."** (vs. 26)

- Long-time Christians need to paid heed. Pride is an insidious enemy for those whose "Christian journey" and reputation seem impeccable.

**Information for community group leaders:**

- Gal. 6:1-10, to be studied, June 8-14; sermon on June 15
- Introduction to the sermon series on the Ten Commandments, to be studied June 15-21; sermon on June 22.

<sup>30</sup>Galatians by David K. Huttar, page 11.

<sup>31</sup>Systematic Theology, by L. Berkhof, page 409.

<sup>32</sup>1 John/Galatians, Serendipity House, page 59.

<sup>33</sup>Systematic Theology, by L. Berkhof, page 533.

<sup>34</sup>Word in Life Bible, page 1841.

<sup>35</sup>Galatians by David K. Huttar, page 152.

<sup>36</sup>1 John/Galatians, Serendipity House, page 59.

<sup>37</sup>Galatians by David K. Huttar, page 152.

<sup>38</sup>Galatians by David K. Huttar, page 155.

<sup>39</sup>1 John/Galatians, Serendipity House, page 59.

<sup>40</sup>Galatians by David K. Huttar, page 155.

<sup>41</sup>Galatians by David K. Huttar, page 156.

<sup>42</sup>1 John/Galatians, Serendipity House, page 59.

<sup>43</sup>Systematic Theology, by L. Berkhof, page 533.

<sup>44</sup>1 John/Galatians, Serendipity House, page 59.

<sup>45</sup>Systematic Theology, by L. Berkhof, page 533.

<sup>46</sup>1 John/Galatians, Serendipity House, page 59.

<sup>47</sup>Galatians by David K. Huttar, pages 157-158.