

Study: Galatians 5:13-26

Leaders Note: This material is full of great stuff! Your group may wish to split this study over two weeks.

Pray for your time together in God's word!

Ask the Group: If you had to choose one word to summarize all of God's commands, which one would you pick?

Read the Passage Out Loud: Galatians 5:13-15

Optional: Read individually.

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Ask the Group: Why do you think Jesus talks about loving your neighbor all the time?

- What is He trying to highlight?

Possible Answer: It is the best way to point others to true love; we love because He first loved us; He desires us to reflect the true Trinitarian love (John 17:20-23).

Ask the Group: Why do we feel like we need to look out for "#1", or love and protect ourselves first, rather than naturally serving our neighbors?

Possible Answers: Because we don't trust the Lord to take care of us and protect us, we're thinking we need to take control; truly loving and serving others leaves us vulnerable.

Ask the Group: Verses 14-15 talk about two options: we will either serve each other or we will destroy each other. What are ways you can still consume and destroy your neighbor even if it's not as obvious as "biting and devouring"?

Possible Answer: Sometimes we serve to get attention, manipulate others, or for our own needs.

Ask the Group: What did it look like for Jesus to put others before Himself?

Possible Answers: He was intentional and specific with people, very deep and narrow. He put the highest value on their relationship with the Lord more than any other need. He didn't give away every moment He had; He was caring for his own body (rest, time alone with the Lord).

Ask the Group: How do you feel genuinely loved?

Leader's Note This can be a challenging question for discussion. You may need to lead out and share your response first—lead with vulnerability! If you have newer members in your group, you may want to rephrase this question to be less awkward for group dynamics, or utilize this topic in your prayer time. This also could be used as part of your community application question.

- How can we as a small group be sincerely serving and loving of each other and those in our community?

Read the Passage Out Loud: Galatians 5:16-21

Optional: Read individually.

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 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.

Ask the Group: What makes the “acts of the flesh” obvious?

Possible Answers: A lot of these sins are community based. A lot of this happens between people. We need the Holy Spirit to have Godly community.

Ask the Group: How do we make sense of the conflict between fleshly desires and the Spirit within us?

Possible Answers: We can still hear sin's temptations, but it is no longer master over us. This is the Christian experience! Uniting with Christ through crucifixion is how we can resist the desires of the flesh and without being under a law. The Spirit is more powerful than the flesh, but the flesh burns against the Spirit. It opposes the Spirit's ideas. Verse 16 is optimistic. The Holy Spirit gives us more power over the flesh. The Law identifies sin, but only the Spirit can help us overpower it.

- What are some other passages of Scripture that talk about the flesh leading to destruction and the Spirit leading to life?
- What additional insights do they offer?

Possible Answers: Romans 8:6

Read the Passage: Galatians 5:22-26

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

²⁴ *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.* ²⁵ *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

²⁶ *Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

The Flesh	The Spirit

Group Exercise: List the acts of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit. Have the groups look at each.

- *Look up definitions for any words group members don't know (e.g. dissensions).*
- *Discuss any common themes you find in the lists.*
- *Discuss anything that stands out as significant.*

Optional: During prayer time you can ask group members if they would add anything to these lists. Are there particular acts of the flesh they struggle with or fruit of the Spirit they desire for their lives?

Ask the Group: What does it mean to walk with and be led by the Spirit?

Possible Answers: We focus on what "keeping step with the Spirit" means—being in line with God. The fruits will flow out of what I am becoming. Depending on God and allowing Him to work through me; our thoughts and actions being aligned by the Spirit. If you're led by the Spirit—the way you're going to relate to others is going to change—love your neighbor as yourself.

Ask the Group: How do we "crucify" (i.e. overcome, put to death) the flesh?

Possible Answers: Pursue God—Gal. 2:20. Paul says that our fleshly desires have already been crucified already (5:24), but then also talks about this tension between the flesh and the spirit and how they're in conflict. We can only crucify the flesh by looking first to Christ.

Ask the Group: How do we become more fruitful?

Possible Answers: If we focus on the fruit, we're doing it wrong. We need to focus on the vine. We focus on the Spirit, seeking nourishment. If a plant is well nourished then it will be fruitful. (John 15) Abide/Belong=rest, belong, be—stop trying to do things, or be better; you have freedom from needing to do, do, do; don't go back to slavery! But live and walk by the Spirit, belong to God. Walking doesn't happen all at once, it takes time, and it's a life-long process.

Ask the Group: What is our community application of this passage?

Leader's Note: You may choose to create your own application question as a group based on your discussion, or highlight a question from this study.