

Local Group Leader Guide

Prayer

Take time each week to pause before jumping into conversation and focus our attention on Jesus. Ask that the Holy Spirit would lead the conversation and speak to us. We long to be a place to encounter His presence, so ask that He would reveal Himself to us and make us aware of Him.

Passage

Galatians 5:16-25

Summary

Our God is a faithful God - a God who can be relied upon, who can be trusted. The idea of reliance and trust is built upon consistency. The idea of consistency (to do something again and again) comes with steadfastness, perseverance and endurance. These words have the same Greek root-word: meno. Meno means "to abide; to stay; to remain." Abiding, or staying, with God is how we learn to BELIEVE He is faithful to be trusted. Often we can KNOW something without believing it. Our words, actions, thoughts, attitudes, and how we spend our time show what we REALLY believe, what we really trust. Ultimately, what we trust is what we are relying upon. What we rely upon is what we trust to protect, or shield, us.

This is faith. Faith is the confidence that something is true, the persuasion of something. Faith is where we put our trust and reliance. We can have faith that our unhealthy coping mechanisms, screen addictions, retail therapy excursions, etc. will protect us. But the real Truth is: the flaming arrows of the enemy will penetrate behind such small shields. God's faithfulness (His trustworthiness, His love, His protection through healthy boundaries, and His heart) is a shield long, wide, and fully-covering. It extinguishes the flaming arrows of the enemy - the lies that say we aren't enough, that we have to earn our worth, that we should be better, that we should try harder, that God could never love us, etc.

The reality is: we WILL be afraid. We will feel fear. What we turn to in this feeling of fear reveals where we put our trust. As we lean on the Holy Spirit to give us the wisdom and power to return to God and His love again and again, we practice abiding: staying. When Jesus says "do not fear" He means: "Don't go anywhere. Trust in me. I'm right here." As we abide in and with Him, the Spirit makes us into faithful people. People who can be trusted and relied upon to speak Truth, to share God's love, to persevere, and to endure. People who consistently show up again and again to be exposed to the King, transformed by His New Life, and surrendered to His love. We practice this by practicing repentance: confessing sin, confessing Truth, laying it down, turning from it, and returning to Jesus.

The Fruit of the Spirit is singular. All the aspects mentioned are a part of ONE fruit. As we abide in our God, (remain close to Him), He bears all of His character qualities in us - and each is affected by the other.

Context

- Galatia was a church where many people were trying to add physical things (like circumcision) to following Jesus, making it a Jesus+ culture. Paul is telling the Galatians it isn't Jesus+ anything. It's just Jesus.
- In Greek, *faith* is "pi's-tis" meaning: The persuasion of something, the confident belief something is true. In regards to Christ: it is the deep and welcome conviction that Jesus is Messiah and we have salvation through Him alone.
- *Faithfulness*: the character quality of being reliable.
- The Fruit of the Spirit is a singular fruit.
- The works of the flesh mentioned in Galatians 5 are things humans will struggle with. Those who do not inherit the Kingdom of God are those who practice them habitually with no regard for

Discussion

Use these questions as a guide for conversation. This time is not about asking these specific questions or even "getting through" them all. Simply facilitate a Jesus-centered conversation and if these questions help do that, then great!

1. Where have you seen the faithfulness/reliability of God in your life?
2. If you're willing to share, where have you witnessed faithfulness betrayed? What feelings did you experience? How did it affect your view of the faithfulness of God? Of where you put your faith/trust?
3. To have faith in something means to put our trust in it. Trusting in God's faithfulness is remaining underneath the covering of trust in Him like a large shield that covers all sides. Often, we step outside of trusting God's faithfulness and put our trust in other things that cannot truly shield us. If you're willing to share, what thing(s) have you trusted to shield you? Where have you added Jesus + rather than just trusting in Jesus?
4. What does it mean to "take up the shield of faith"? (Eph 6:16)
5. Jesus is the faithful one (Hebrews 13:8). How can you practically grow in the practice of abiding in Him and His faithfulness this week?

Prayer

These prompts can be used as a guide for prayer. However, feel free to allow the Holy Spirit to lead where and how to pray, contend, and intercede.

- Take time to practice confession and repentance. Practice laying down false shields and confess the faithfulness of God. Contend on each other's behalf for the ability to abide in Jesus and in His faithfulness.
- Pray for the Fruit of the Spirit to be born in everyone's life.