

**Galatians 5:19-26 – Walking According to the Flesh or the Spirit?**  
**Community Group Galatians Lesson 12**

**I. Review Galatians 1-5:18**

- A. 1:1-10 – God sent me to correct you from distorting the gospel by adding to it.
- B. 1:11-2:10 – My gospel came from Christ Himself and was authenticated by the apostles.
- C. 2:11-21 – Even Peter had to be reminded that we are saved by faith alone.
- D. 3:1-14 – The gospel justifies everyone by faith in the promise, just like Abraham was.
- E. 3:15-29 – The law tutored us to faith in Christ and we share Abraham’s inheritance.
- F. 4:1-31 – You are His child and heir, no longer under regulations of external control, so don’t adopt the law.
- G. 5:1-12 – You have been set free! Do not subject yourself to a law that severs you from Christ.
- H. 5:13-18 – Walk by the Spirit and you’ll not fulfill the desires of the flesh

**II. Legalism, License or Liberty**

**Overview**

Paul has shown the Galatians that there are three options when it comes to our tendency to sin: *submitting to the law* (legalism); *license* (giving yourself a pretext for the flesh); or *enjoy the liberty God has given us in Christ by walking by faith and loving others through serving*. The gospel was designed for only the last of those three options.

**III. Deeds of the Flesh Are Evident**

**Galatians 5:19-21**

- A. It is evident (v. 19) if we carry out the desire of the flesh (v. 16). This is not an exhaustive list (see v. 21, “*and things like these*”) of carnal behavior. These deeds are *representative* of the kinds of things we do if we operate according to the flesh.

B. Sexual Sins

Immorality (*pornea*) – all illicit sexual behavior, which is everything outside loving marital sexual relations between a man and woman; notice *pornography* comes from it.  
Impurity (*akatharsia*) – every form of unclean behavior; comes from two words – a (away from) + catharsis (clean out) = away from that which cleans out (as in, a wound)  
Sensuality – (*aselgeia*) – unrestrained sexual indulgence

C. Spiritual Sins

Idolatry – most likely referring to worshiping man-made images religiously, and its proximity in this list to sexual sins may refer to the frequency of sexual sin in idolatry  
Sorcery (*pharmakeia*) – witchcraft w/ mind-altering drugs (often in a religious context)

D. Relational Sins

Enmities – hatred of a group for another group (plural)  
Strife (*Eris, goddess of strife*) – discord and rancor, esp. but not only between individuals  
Jealousy – self-centered possessiveness  
Angry outbursts – outbursts of temper (sometimes following jealousy)  
Disputes – focus is on self-centered desire of certain disagreements  
Dissensions and Factions – divisions which give rise to enmities  
Envying – desire to possess that which is another’s (coveting)

E. Substance Sins

Drunkenness – excessive use of strong drink  
Carousing (*komoi*) – crude partying, including alcohol and sexual elements

F. Things Like These

Paul’s point is that those who are functioning according to the flesh will be guilty of many of these things and these are not all... that is, there may be other such things. (For example, one writer counts 124 separate sins mentioned in the New Testament.)

- G. We do well to remember lists like this (as well as 1 Cor. 6:9-11, 2 Cor. 12:20-21). When we are dealing with a Christian who manifests several of these sins, we can rightly show them that there is a pattern of godlessness manifested in multiple ways, and to confront them accordingly. Repentance for them is not likely to be in just one area.
- H. *“Of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”* 5:22
1. Most commentators say this means that whoever habitually lives out any of this list of sins will not go to heaven. They conclude *“not inherit the kingdom of God”* means not get into heaven. For example, John MacArthur says that the word **practice** is the key. He says the *“continual, habitual **practice of such things** marks a person as unregenerate and therefore barred from entrance into the **kingdom of God**”*. Like most others, he focuses on the word “practice” and concludes that “not inherit the kingdom” means “not enter heaven.” Here are five problems with that position.
  2. First, it changes the gospel. Instead of saying, *“whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life has passed out of death into life,”* we would say, “whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ will have eternal life if he also avoids certain things.”
  3. Second, it would mean that anyone who has come to know Christ by faith but who hardens their heart and falls into practicing one or more of these habitual sins and does not alter their life either a) loses their salvation (Arminian position), or b) never “really believed” in the first place (strong Calvinist/Reformed position).
  4. Third, it means that someone is actually saved by believing on Christ AND by avoiding the ongoing pattern of sins mentioned in this section. This would mean that we are not saved by faith alone in Christ alone. The other side employs a circular reasoning: *“anyone truly saved will not practice such sins as these.”* I believe that no well interpreted scriptures teach that (including 1 Cor. 6:9-10, 1 John 2:4 and 3:4-10).
  5. Fourth, it would mean that either a) this particular list is more sinful than sins not listed and therefore uniquely has the power to keep you from heaven, or b) any ongoing sin pattern that fits into immorality, anger, religious unfaithfulness or substance abuse (“things like these”) can keep you from heaven.
  6. Fifth, it neglects the NT teaching that those who do not inherit the kingdom (see Matt. 25:34, 1 Cor. 6:9-11, Gal. 5:21, Eph. 5:5) fail to inherit the kingdom not because of their sins (which for believers in Christ are forgiven, resulting in the gift of eternal life) but because they were not faithful believers (e.g., 1 Cor. 10:1-12, Heb. 6:4-6, 10:26-31). As a result, they enter heaven, but experience regret as they do not inherit the rewards of the faithful (Rev. 2:17, 26-27, etc.), and instead experience shame and sorrow at the BEMA (1 Cor. 3:10-15, 2 Cor. 5:10-11, 2 Tim. 2:11-13, 1 John 2:28, etc.).

#### IV. Fruit of the Spirit

#### Galatians 5:22-24

Paul shows believers the fruit emerging from their life if they walk by the Spirit. These things are not automatic for believers, and perhaps more uncommon than common. This list would go along with other NT passages that promise certain key blessings to those who “have their mind set on the Spirit” (Romans 8:6 – life and peace), “grow in the knowledge of Christ” (2 Peter 1:2-3 – multiplied grace and peace and all things necessary for life and godliness) and “abide in Him” (John 15 – bear much fruit).

- A. Love – agape – **other-centered self-sacrifice** □ This is the primary fruit, listed first for a reason. Some want to make it the real fruit and the others a subset of it. I don’t think that holds up or is helpful. All the others are specific qualities in and of themselves.

- B. Joy – chara – **internal fullness and well-being regardless of circumstance** ☐ It is an overflow of the sufficiency and presence of the Lord, promised to all who abide in Him (cf., John 15:11).
- C. Peace – eirene – **internal restedness again, regardless of circumstance** ☐ As Swindoll points out, “it defies understanding” (cf., Philippians 4:7). It is often most on display in difficult circumstances because its visibility in times of pain appears incongruous.
- D. Patience – makrothumia – **bearing up under great load** ☐ It is the opposite of angry outburst. It is like “long-suffering.” It carries the quality of endurance, not being reactionary, being able to wait for the good.
- E. Kindness – chrestotes – **acts of thoughtful benevolence towards other people** ☐ Might see it as *grace in action* in the sense that kindness is not a deed we owe someone
- F. Goodness – agathos - **moral and spiritual excellence** – not merely *acceptable* morally, but upright beyond the basics (See Galatians 6:10)
- G. Faithfulness – pistis - **following through, doing what was promised or required**
- H. Gentleness – prautes - **meekness, strength under control, not reacting**
- I. Self-Control – enkrateia – **restraining oneself in desires and appetites**

V. **If We Live By the Spirit, Let Us Walk By the Spirit**

**Galatians 5:25-26**

A. **Let us walk by the Spirit.**

**Gal. 5:25**

Paul’s “if we live by the Spirit” is a first class condition. That means, “if we... and we do.” So he says to the Galatians, “Since we all live by the Spirit and not by the flesh” (see Galatians 3:2-5, Romans 8:9), then *let us also walk by the power and influence and leadership of the Holy Spirit rather than by our own wisdom* (see also 2 Cor. 10:3).

This is an **exhortation to believers** that if we already live in the realm of the Spirit (and we do), then we have no reason to not “walk by” the Spirit.

- B. This list lets us know whether we are walking by the Spirit by that which proceeds in our lives. Plus, it is a motivating list, one that should make Christians *want to walk by the Spirit*. But it doesn’t tell us **exactly** how. We have to get as much of that as we can from surrounding texts and from other parts of the Bible. **(See Appendix One)**
- C. *Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.* **Gal. 5:26**  
Paul reminds the Galatians of two things: 1) Don’t do what 5:15 warns you about; 2) The kinds of things that happen when you do not walk by the Spirit are contained in this verse. These are the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit. And they are the opposite of 6:1 (which we will look at next week). For the reason that verse 26 contains the same warnings that were in 5:15 and is the opposite of 6:1, we properly see verse 26 as a “swing verse” – that is, one that applies to the past section and introduces the next.

**VI. Discussion and Homework**

- A. How do you resolve the dilemma of “not inherit the kingdom?”
  - B. How do you walk in the Spirit?
  - C. What should a person do if we notice the deeds of the flesh characterizing us?
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- D. Read the whole book in one sitting this week.
- E. Read Appendices 1, 2 & 3 on page 5-8

## APPENDIX ONE: Walk By the Spirit – What is it?

John Morrison

Galatians 5 teaches us that walking by the Spirit will keep us from fulfilling the desires of the flesh (5:16). If instead, we give into the desires of the flesh, it will be evident through deeds of the flesh, including but not limited to sexual sins, religious sins, relational sins, and substance-related/carousing sins. But those who walk by the Spirit will manifest the fruit of the Spirit: *Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*. Those facts make us conclude that the **life of the Spirit** is holiness and other-centered service (5:13-14, 22-24) while the **life of the flesh** is sinful self-indulgence, conflict, filthiness and destructive behavior (5:15, 19-21, 26).

The difficulty is that there is no biblical definition of how to “walk by the Spirit.” As a result, we have to infer. So how do we walk by the Spirit? What clues do we have about walking in the Spirit?

1. It’s not automatic for believers or we wouldn’t be exhorted to do it/warned if we don’t (5:16).
2. It is a product of the Holy Spirit working in us, and is not based on our own effort (5:22).
3. It is for the believer the equivalent of what the gospel was for the unbeliever. It is the result of God’s grace, engendered by the Holy Spirit, brought on by faith (see Galatians 3:5).
4. It is the opposite of walking under the law or using freedom for selfish ends. It is the opposite of walking under the law in that it is not the result of do’s and don’ts. It is the opposite of selfish ends in that it is pure and other centered and characterized by loving service.
5. It is similar to abiding in Christ (see John 15:1-11). That involves being in His Word and walking in loving obedience (John 13:34-35; John 14:15, 21, 23).
6. It is the result of walking by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).
7. The same idea is developed in 1 John where the focus is fellowship with the Father and the Son, recognition of and confession of sin, remembering our forgiveness, abiding in Christ, walking in love.
8. Walking by the Spirit is like Romans 8:6, *The mind set on the flesh is death but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace*.
9. When Jesus says, “I came that you might have life and that more abundantly” (Jn. 10:10) and “This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent” (John 17:3), he refers to eternal life as a relationship – the knowledge of God. Similarly, “walking by the Spirit” is walking in the knowledge of, the intimacy with, the Lord.
10. Walking by the Spirit is reflected in a blend of Galatians 2:20 and Romans 6:1-14 and 2 Cor. 5:17-21. Since I died with Christ (Romans 6:8), it is no longer I who live (Galatians 2:20). I am a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). That happened because I was united with Christ in His death and was raised with Him in this new life (Romans 6:5). As a result, the life I live now by faith in the Son of God is now the life of Christ (Gal. 2:20).

Even all that biblical teaching leaves something to be desired. We can read and nod our heads, but still be left with the question: What does it look like? Well, from a result standpoint, it looks like the fruit of the Spirit. From a process standpoint, it looks like knowing we have no righteousness of our own, resting in the righteousness of Christ, remembering that we have died to sin, and living by faith.

## APPENDIX TWO: Chuck Swindoll's Diary Entry on The Fruit of the Spirit

As I write these words, I'm at 35,000 feet. It's 5:45pm Saturday; it should be 4:15pm. The airliner was an hour and a half late. People are grumpy. Some are downright mad. Flight attendants are apologizing, promising extra booze to take off the edge. To complicate matters, a Japanese gentleman across the aisle has a rather severe nosebleed and they're trying to instruct the poor chap . . . but he doesn't speak a word of English!

So, now our meal is late. The lady on my left has a cold and makes an enormous sound when she sneezes (about every 90 seconds—I've timed her). It's something like a dying calf in a hailstorm or a bull moose with one leg in a trap. Oh, one more thing. The sports video just broke and so did the nervous systems of half the men on board.

It's a flying zoo!

It all started with the delay. "Mechanical trouble," they said. "Inexcusable," responded a couple of passengers. Frankly, I'd rather they fix it before we leave than decide to do something about it at 35,000 feet. But we Americans don't like to wait. Delays are irritating. Aggravating. Nerve jangling. Faced with delay, we are consistently—and, I might add, obnoxiously—demanding. We want what we want when we want it. Nobody finds a delay easy to accept.

In the midst of this kind of situation, Paul's description of the "fruit of the Spirit," seems a little nuts. I can imagine overflowing with those virtues when everything is running smoothly, when the world isn't handing me a raw deal. But when nothing is going right, how can I be expected to live like that? Let me apply this to my onboard chaos:

- Love . . . this lady sneezing on me?
- Joy . . . when they took away our only means of entertainment?
- Peace . . . when everybody is in a panic?
- Patience . . . when we've been irreversibly delayed?
- Kindness . . . when we're all on edge and hungry?
- Goodness . . . when all we want to do is lash out?
- Faithfulness . . . when everything in us tells us to take our cue from the majority?
- Gentleness . . . when the flight attendant scowls at me?
- Self-control . . . when I've already lost it inside?

Yes, the rubber of Christianity meets the road of proof at just such intersections in life, whether earthbound or airborne. As the expression goes, our faith gets "fleshed out" at times like these. The best test of my Christian character occurs not in the quietness of my study but in the everyday events of life. Anybody can walk in victory when surrounded by books, silence, a fresh cup of coffee, and warm waves of sunshine splashing through the window. But those late takeoffs, those grocery lines, those busy restaurants, those traffic jams! That's where the fruit of the Spirit faces the rude realities of life.

As we cultivate the fruit of the Spirit, we begin to gain the ability to accept delay or disappointment, to smile at setbacks and respond with a pleasant, understanding spirit. The ability to cool it when others around you curse it.

For a change, I refused to be hassled by today's delay. I asked God to keep me calm and cheerful, relaxed and refreshed. And you know what? He did. He really did. No pills. No booze. No hocus-pocus. Just relying on and relaxing in the power of the Spirit.

I can't promise you that others will understand. In fact, when the expected response is the "deeds of the flesh," the fruit of the Spirit looks a little weird. You see, I've got another problem now. Ever since takeoff I've been smiling at the flight attendants, hoping to encourage them. But just now I think I overheard one of them say, "Watch that guy wearing glasses. I think he's had too much to drink."

## ChristianityToday.com - Walking by the Spirit

*The following is a transcript of Randy Smith explaining the meaning of "walk in the spirit" from Galatians 5:16. It is taken from "In Touch," Charles Stanley's radio show, 3/3/10.*

Walking by the spirit is just living a life in the Spirit. It's living your life in the continual presence of the Spirit of God. Jesus put it like this in John 15, that we need to abide in him, basically the same thing. If we abide in Jesus, the spirit is working within us. So as we abide in Jesus Christ, as we abide in that vine, as a branch abides in the vine, the Holy Spirit is pulsating the sap into our body, if I could put it that way. And he is producing then fruit in our lives. But as Jesus said, "When I'm separated from that vine, I shrivel up and I die."

So walking in the spirit is a God consciousness. It's having Christ foremost in all your affections. It's pursuing God with all of your heart, as we're commanded to. as the Great Commandment. It's to have no other idols before you and no other gods before you, but to serve God alone with all of your heart.

I think what's important to understand too when we talk about abiding in Jesus is that the way we abide in Jesus is to be practicing what we call the spiritual disciplines. I can't abide in Jesus just by doing what I want to do. Abiding Jesus is giving us the means he has given us that he uses to bring grace into our lives. Things like Bible reading, Bible memorization, Bible meditation, prayer, fellowship, church attendance, evangelism, serving other people. These are ways that we abide in Jesus.

Now, a lot of people come up to me and they say, "Can we have a specific explanation as to how long I need to pray and how long I need to read the word?" Well, that would contradict everything Paul has already argued in Galatians, because now we're back to legalism again. We can't do that. So God has to place that upon your heart, somehow using the spiritual disciplines that he has given to us. As we remain in them, we abide in Jesus, and as we abide in Jesus, his spirit is working in our lives and we are then walking in the spirit.

We can, throughout the day, and this is true for every Christian, either be in the spirit or in the flesh. I don't think it's 75%/25%, 50/50. You're either in one or in the other. And it is our goal as Christians now that we have the spirit dwelling within us and the ability and power to overcome the flesh, to continually live a life walking in the spirit.

### **How to Walk in the Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is one of God's most precious gifts to His beloved children. He takes up residence within the believer at the moment of salvation and empowers him to overcome sin and live for God's glory and purposes. However, the Spirit's power can be "turned off" or ignored. Only those who choose to walk with Him have unhindered access to His strength and guidance.

Walking by the Spirit denotes reliance upon Him. He leads the way, and we follow. As He speaks, we listen, heed His warnings, and obey His directions. The Spirit's way is a path of surrender which, although difficult, leads to fullness of life.

God's Spirit not only guides; He also empowers because the challenge of obeying Him is impossible in our own strength. The Holy Spirit supplies everything we need to live a godly life, and He produces His amazing fruit in us.

Being led by the Spirit should be the natural lifestyle of the sons and daughters of God. As you intentionally seek to maintain an awareness of His presence throughout the day, He is only a thought away. When your mind turns to Him, He gives sensitivity to the things of God and understanding about the situations and people in your life.

Take a walk with the Spirit today, and learn to know His voice. Whenever your mind is not occupied with the duties of the day, focus your thoughts on Him, asking for His guidance and looking expectantly for His leading. When He gives it, rely on His power to obey.

*Excerpt from ["Walking in the Spirit" - In Touch - Mar. 3, 2010](#) by Charles Stanley*