

Sermon Title: Check Your Fruit

Focal Exegesis: What we allow to guide our lives determines whether our lives produce good fruit or rotten fruit.

Leader Guide

- Begin with prayer: ask the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion
- Encourage Participation: invite everyone to share and reflect
- Keep the focus on Jesus: not just head knowledge, but heart transformation
- Shepherd the group: be sensitive to struggles, doubts, and opportunities for care
- Be H.O.T (humble, open, transparent) when sharing your perspective

In-Depth Summary of the Sermon

In Galatians chapter 5:16-26, Paul teaches that believers should let the Holy Spirit guide their lives rather than their sinful nature. Just as we trust a guide or GPS to lead us to the right destination, we must place our trust and dependence on the Holy Spirit to lead us in God's way and to His intended destination! Allowing the Holy Spirit to guide our lives results in producing good fruit! However, when we don't allow the holy spirit to guide our lives, we inevitably produce rotten fruit and forfeit the kingdom of God.

The Holy Spirit and our Sinful Nature are Opposing forces

The sinful nature and the Holy Spirit are constantly at odds, like two teams in a tug of war. Sometimes the Spirit feels stronger in our lives, other times the sinful nature seems to pull harder. Paul explains that this ongoing struggle makes it difficult, though not impossible, to live out our good intentions.

We ultimately decide which side dominates by what we feed—through our choices, habits, and influences. If we feed the flesh, sin gains strength; if we feed the Spirit, godliness prevails.

Even so, neither side ever lets go. The sinful nature is always tugging at us, and the Spirit never stops pulling us toward Christ. The good news is that even when sin overwhelms us, Jesus never gives up. He keeps calling us back, extending patience, kindness, and grace awaiting our return to him.

Application Questions:

1. What is your perspective on this ongoing tug of war between your sinful nature and the Holy Spirit?
2. What are some ways you unintentionally feed your sinful nature?
3. What are some ways we can intentionally feed the spirit?

Leader Notes:

- Guide them to think practically.
- Feeding the sinful nature examples: constant social media, unhealthy relationships, music or entertainment that glorifies sin, unchecked anger, comparison, gossip.
- Feeding the Spirit examples: prayer, worship, reading Scripture, Christian community, serving others, fasting.
- Emphasize the principle: "What you feed grows."

- Prompt if needed: “Which influences in your life pull you closer to Christ? Which tend to pull you away?”

The Holy Spirit Frees Us From the Law of Moses

Paul reminds the Galatians that when we are led by the Holy Spirit, we are no longer bound to the law of Moses. The law contained 613 strict commands, which no one could fully keep, and therefore could not bring salvation. The law revealed our weakness and need for a Savior. Jesus fulfilled what the law could not do—He lived the perfect life we could not, and died the death we deserved, so that through Him we might be free from sin’s control. Now, instead of striving to earn righteousness through rules, believers are called to trust in Christ and live under the Spirit’s guidance

Application Question: Sometimes we still try to “earn” God’s approval by our own efforts. In what areas of your life do you find it hardest to rely on grace instead of performance?

Leader Notes:

- Normalize the struggle: everyone experiences moments of self-reliance vs. trusting God.
- Encourage participants to reflect honestly on areas where they rely on their own efforts instead of God’s grace.
- Help them connect the idea of freedom in Christ to practical, everyday life.
- Remind the group: God’s grace is sufficient, and our performance does not earn His love.
- Reinforce hope: freedom in Christ is ongoing; learning to rely on Him is a journey, not a one-time event.

Fruit of Our Sinful Nature vs Fruit of the Spirit

Paul contrasts the destructive consequences of following the sinful nature with the blessing of living by the Holy Spirit.

- I. Sinful nature: Following its desires leads to chaos, immorality, jealousy, anger, selfishness, division, and other sins that ultimately forfeit the Kingdom of God. While some sins may feel exciting or freeing in the moment, they enslave us through shame, regret, and loss of control. Satan deceives by telling partial truths (AKA Lies)—he shows what seems pleasurable but hides the consequences.
- II. Holy Spirit: Yielding to the Spirit produces good fruit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Living by the Spirit requires intentionality and dependence on God, and it leads to tranquility, blessing, and growth, both for ourselves and those around us.

Application Questions:

1. The choice between following the sinful nature and the Spirit is ongoing. How can recognizing the consequences of sin motivate us to rely more fully on the Holy Spirit?
2. Yielding to the Spirit produces good fruit like love, peace, and self-control. Which fruit of the Spirit do you find most challenging to cultivate, and why?

Leader Notes:

- Purpose: Identify personal growth areas and connect them to reliance on the Spirit.
- Highlight: Fruit of the Spirit requires intentionality and dependence on God.
- Keep the discussion reflective but hopeful. Balance honesty about struggle with the encouragement of God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit.
- This may be a great moment to stop and pray over specific fruit of the spirit attendees want to grow in.

Believers Must Nail the Passions and Desires of the Sinful Nature to the Cross

Believers in Christ are called to crucify the desires of their sinful nature, just as Jesus was crucified on the cross. Living by the Spirit means allowing Him to guide every part of our lives. This reminds us that:

- Jesus' sacrifice enables us to overcome sin.
- We are called to take up our own cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24).
- Death to the flesh can be difficult and painful.
- Our sinful desires must be dealt with decisively, not ignored or compromised.

Key takeaway: Following the Spirit requires intentional surrender and daily commitment to live in alignment with Christ.

Application Question: What does it look like in your daily life to 'crucify the desires of your sinful nature' and follow the Spirit's leading?

Leader Notes:

- Encourage participants to reflect on practical ways to surrender sinful desires and live Spirit-led.
- Connect the teaching to personal action, not just theory.
- Invite participants to identify one specific area of their life to surrender to the Spirit this week.
- Remind participants: crucifying the flesh is challenging but fruitful. The Spirit empowers us to live victoriously.

Practical Belief Correction Chart

Defeater Belief	Biblical Truth	Actionable Step
I have to earn God's approval by my own efforts.	God's approval comes through Christ, not performance. We live by the Spirit, not the law. (v.16, v.24)	Daily surrender: start your day asking the Spirit to guide your thoughts and actions rather than relying on your own strength.
My sinful desires are too strong; I can't change.	The Spirit empowers believers to overcome the desires of the flesh. (v.16)	Identify one area of struggle and ask the Holy Spirit for strength to resist temptation.
Sin is harmless if it feels good or is socially accepted.	Following the sinful nature produces chaos, enslavement, and separation from God. (v.19-21)	Reflect on behaviors society normalizes: evaluate them in light of Scripture and choose Spirit-led alternatives.

I can follow Christ and still gratify my flesh without consequences.	Yielding to sin produces rotten fruit; yielding to the Spirit produces life-giving fruit. (v.22-23)	Make a concrete decision this week to replace one fleshly habit with a Spirit-led habit (prayer, serving, gratitude).
I have to rely on my own strength to overcome sin.	The Holy Spirit lives in us to guide, empower, and produce fruit. (v.25)	Memorize or repeat a verse about reliance on the Spirit (e.g., Galatians 5:16) and meditate on it when tempted.
Freedom in Christ means I can do whatever I want.	True freedom is living under the Spirit's guidance, producing love, joy, peace, and self-control. (v.22-26)	Write down one decision or habit this week where you can intentionally follow the Spirit instead of doing whatever feels natural.
My past failures define me; I am stuck in my sinful nature.	In Christ, our sinful desires are nailed to the cross; we can live Spirit-led lives. (v.24-25)	Reflect on past sins, confess, and intentionally commit one area to Spirit-led transformation this week.

Five-Day Devotional: Guided by the Holy Spirit

Day 1: Let the Holy Spirit Guide Your Life

Scripture: Galatians 5:16 – “So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves.”

Theme: Trust the Holy Spirit as your personal guide in every area of life.

Comment: Just as a GPS directs us on unfamiliar roads, the Holy Spirit shows us the way when we place our trust in Him.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, I choose to trust You as my guide today. Lead me away from sin and toward Your perfect plan for my life. Amen.

Day 2: The Tug of War Within

Scripture: Galatians 5:17 – “The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires.”

Theme: Recognize the constant battle between the flesh and the Spirit.

Comment: Life as a believer is a tug of war, but I get to choose which side I feed.

Prayer: Lord, strengthen me to resist the desires of my sinful nature and to follow the Spirit’s leading, even when the battle feels intense. Amen.

Day 3: Freedom from the Law

Scripture: Galatians 5:18 – “But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.”

Theme: Embrace the freedom Christ gives through the Spirit.

Comment: Salvation isn’t earned by rules but received by trusting Jesus and yielding to the Spirit.

Prayer: Father, thank You for the freedom in Christ. Help me live by Your Spirit and not by my own efforts to obey the law. Amen.

Day 4: The Consequence of Sin

Scripture: Galatians 5:19-21 – “When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear... anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.”

Theme: Sin has clear consequences that lead away from God’s Kingdom.

Comment: Giving in to the sinful nature produces chaos, shame, and separation, while resisting it leads to life.

Prayer: Lord, give me the discernment to see the destructive path of sin and the courage to turn away from it. Help me pursue holiness. Amen.

Day 5: Produce the Fruit of the Spirit

Scripture: Galatians 5:22-24 – “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

Theme: Yield to the Spirit and cultivate godly character.

Comment: Living by the Spirit produces fruit that blesses both my life and those around me.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, help me to crucify my sinful desires and bear Your fruit daily, reflecting Christ in every action and word. Amen.