



**Galatians 5:1,
6, 16-26
(NRSV)**

¹For freedom
Christ has set us

free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love.

¹⁶Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

Opening

1. **Pray:** God of grace, you love us so deeply and without condition. Hold us in that love here. Help us to experience it and share it with one another. Amen
2. **Share:** What is your favorite kind of tree and why? What kind of environment does it need to thrive?

Dive Into the Text

1. In what ways do we find freedom through Christ, as verse 1 states?
2. What does verse 6 mean by faith working in love?
3. The term “flesh” here means “selfishness” or “self-centered fear.” In what ways does selfishness or self-centered fear produce the fruits of the flesh that Paul lists in verses 19 and 20?
4. Reread the fruits of the Spirit in verses 22 and 23. How does faith working in love naturally produce these fruits in our lives?



Willow Tree. Darren Larsen via Flickr.

Living a life of faith working in love takes intention, discipline, and practice. It is easy to read the fruits of the Spirit

and feel inadequate. The truth of the matter is that without practicing the means of God’s grace, it is easy to grow old in the faith without growing up in the faith. The highest form of faith in Jesus is not mere belief, but it is continual growth in the capacity to love: love God and love neighbor without conditions.

Devotional Practices

Individual

- Read scripture
- Prayer
- Meditating
- Fasting
- Healthy living
- Sharing faith

Communal

- Worship
- Communion
- Small Groups
- Bible study

Practices of Solidarity

Individual

- Do good works
- Visit the sick
- Visit those in prison
- Feed the hungry
- Give generously

Communal

- Seek justice
- Work toward ending oppression & discrimination
- Care for the needs of the poor

Go Deeper

1. In what ways does self-centered fear and pride get in the way of growing in God’s grace by sharing it with others?
2. What practices (Means of Grace) help you to stay grounded and centered in God’s grace?
3. What practices that Methodists would call Works of Mercy (actions to show compassion and love to those who are hurting – see list) have helped you encounter God’s grace in unexpected and faith-renewing ways?
4. What are Means of Grace you want to be more intentional about engaging to continue to grow your trust in God and your ability to love more fully?

Close in Prayer

Close your time together in prayer.