NOVEMBER 29, 2026

SERIES 3: JOY IN THANKSGIVING

LESSON 3.5: WALK IN THE SPIRIT

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God's Spirit changes our lives.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will live Spirit-filled and Spirit-led.

LESSON TEXT GALATIANS 5:16–26

KEY PASSAGE GALATIANS 5:22–23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

TEACHING OUTLINE

ICEBREAKER: How have your tastes or preferences changed with age?

TEACHER TIP: Connect the group's answers to Paul's call to love the things of the Spirit more than the things of the world.

CONNECT: Share the Connect segment.

I. THE BATTLE WITHIN
   - A. Our Sinful Nature Versus the Spirit
   - B. Our Sinful Nature Left Unchecked

     DISCUSS: *Why do you suppose Paul referred to works of the flesh but fruit of the Spirit?*
   - C. I will confess I need the Holy Spirit's help.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS US LIVE HOLY
   - A. Our Desires Change
   - B. Transformed from the Inside Out

     DISCUSS: *Why is it important that God changes us from the inside out rather than from the outside in?*
   - C. I will submit to the work of the Holy Spirit.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S FRUITFULNESS
   - A. Fruit as a Blessing to Others

     DISCUSS: *If you could have more of one fruit of the Spirit, what would you want most?*
   - B. The Need to Live Spirit-filled and Spirit-led **(V)**
   - C. I will live Spirit-filled and Spirit-led.

APPLY: Share the Apply segment. **(I)**

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer for God to bring spiritual growth and transformation.

CONNECT

ELISE GREW UP in a home where love smelled like Folgers. Before school each day, she would crawl into bed between her parents as they shared a family ritual: the morning cup of coffee. Occasionally, she would try a spoonful of the bitter drink, which she promptly spat out and scrubbed away with bubblegum toothpaste. One day, while playing with her cousins, the oldest of the bunch began to brag about drinking coffee like the grown-ups. Elise declared that she was allowed to drink coffee too. To prove her point, Elise and her cousins made their way to the kitchen, and she choked down a heavily sugared share of coffee.

As she grew, her preferences moved through the café menu, from hot chocolates to Frappuccinos to lattes. One evening at her pastor's house, she was introduced to the fine art of coffee brewing via a French press. Between cautious sips, she moved from tolerance to craving. Her interest expanded through different forms of equipment and single-origin beans. Over years of experimentation, Elise adopted a slightly refined take on her childhood memories: one steaming cup of black pour-over every morning.

Tastes change with time and for good reason. Children are ultra sensitive to colors, smells, textures, and flavors—particularly bitterness, which protects them from poison. Many children also have a sugar obsession. Though candy and other sweet treats are harmful in excess, an adolescent sugar craving is highly practical because children need a lot of energy to grow from infancy to adulthood. Similarly, pregnant women develop heightened sensitivity to bitterness and are less affected by salt: a palate change that allows them to meet increasing sodium requirements for them and their baby. A host of peculiar cravings signal nutritional needs because within a mother grows her baby's eyes, ears, and tiny fingernails.

As we mature, we lose some sensitivity to taste and smell, making acidic, fermented, and pungent foods a little easier to stomach. We may also become more adventurous eaters and find unlikely friends in new foods through pleasant memories and positive associations. In the kitchen, familiarity breeds contentment.

For those new to the faith, the flavor of righteousness might sound as appetizing as black coffee to a child. Fortunately, preferences change with maturity. As we live a Spirit-led life, open to God's way of living, we will find that change comes from within. We begin to crave more time with Him and His Word. We long for more preaching and teaching to feed our soul, and we even read and study to feed our own soul between services. When we have tasted of the goodness of God, we discover new desires and delights are available to us.

LEARN

I. THE BATTLE WITHIN

Most children go through a phase of resisting help. "I can do it myself" is a valid statement when coloring between

the lines, but not so much when tiny hands grab for scissors. Paul must have felt a similar kind of parental frustration when writing to the church at Galatia. After converting to faith in Jesus, the church had returned from solely following Jesus to Law keeping. Paul protested, "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11). Looking to the Law rather than to Jesus Christ for salvation and sanctification is a foolish, self-reliant attempt at righteousness. It is like toddlers throwing temper tantrums because they want to button their own shirts and tie their own shoes. Instead of putting confidence in the flesh—human efforts that yield human results—the church is reminded to rely completely on God's Spirit.

A. Our Sinful Nature Versus the Spirit

Paul stated that those who "walk in the Spirit" will not fulfill the "lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). In other words, those who follow the Spirit's leading in their daily lives are capable of choosing God's priorities over their own fallible passions. The flesh (our selfish human nature) wars against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; in the realm of human frailty and temptation, our immediate desires are often in conflict with the Spirit's purpose. God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours. Denying the flesh and choosing God's way is admitting we need Him; we cannot be righteous on our own. Living in the tension between appeasing our flesh and pleasing God is exhausting; we cannot do the things we want to do (verse 17). However, Spirit-filled Christians are not doomed to live a life of divided loyalty.

Some Christians in Galatia were enchanted with the Law. Identity markers like circumcision or Jewish holy days were a show of worship. However, Paul responded that those who are led by the Spirit "are not under the law" (verse 18). Prior to the saving work of Calvary, the Law convicted God's people of their sin, but it could not redeem them. It challenged but could not deliver complete change. Human efforts, even religious practice, are wholly inadequate apart from the Spirit.

B. Our Sinful Nature Left Unchecked

The Spirit grounds our choices in eternity, while the flesh seeks instant gratification, self-preservation, and cheap validation. Unchecked by the Spirit, the works of the flesh are bitter fruits, rotten with shame. The flesh makes a poor leader, luring its follower down a treacherous path of adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and more of the same (verses 19–21). Those who practice these vices will not inherit the kingdom of God. Those who invest in temporal pleasures will reap temporary and underwhelming rewards.

DISCUSS: *Why do you suppose Paul referred to works of the flesh but fruit of the Spirit?*

C. I will confess I need the Holy Spirit's help.

When we are born of the Spirit, we are called to liberty. Liberation from the demands and consequences of the Law is not a license to serve sin or self, but freedom to pursue a higher calling of love and service. The Spirit's freedom comes with purpose, not futility. Think of people who are freed from prison, only to become repeat offenders. Though they serve their sentence, freedom can feel oppressive without support, meaningful work, and assistance creating structure apart from prison life. God does not free us and leave us to our own devices. The Spirit offers

strength, guidance, and the gift of responsibility to others.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS US LIVE HOLY

A. Our Desires Change

The Spirit does more than give miraculous gifts or meet us in powerful church services. God transforms our hearts. While the Law provides instructions on what to do and what not to do, the Spirit helps us live holy in our actions and desires. Led by the Spirit, we begin to share God's heart, longing for what He loves, hating what He hates, and feeling a burden for His purpose. God is not concerned with making us socially acceptable; He wants to change us from within. Loving what God loves starts with simply loving God.

Those who belong to Christ "have crucified the flesh" with its passions and lusts (verse 24). Surrendering our lives to the Lord requires surrendering our loves. We look to the example of Jesus, who lived a life of perfect submission to the will of God. Saying yes to the cross, Jesus said no to Heaven's glory, earthly comfort, temporal rewards, false worship, and the approval of men. The end of His sacrifice was not the darkness of the tomb, but the light of glory. When we surrender our fleshly desires to God, He replaces them with far better longings that He alone will satisfy.

B. Transformed from the Inside Out

Paul could have said the fruit of the Spirit is tithing, clapping our hands in worship, or reading the Bible every day. After all, the works of the flesh described are just that—works. In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is described in a list of virtuous traits. Godly actions are commendable and necessary demonstrations of faith, yet the work of the Spirit goes deeper than religious activities. God wants to redeem what we do, what we love, and indeed, everything we are. Motives, attitudes, and identities are transformed and manifested to others in changed behavior. While fleshly efforts focus on maintaining an impressive facade, the Spirit works from the inside out.

Paul compared being filled with the Spirit to being adopted. He wrote, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). This incredible shift from strangers to sons changes everything. We don't possess an elusive, unknowable spirit, but the very Spirit of Jesus teaching us and forming us to His image. Jesus promised that His Spirit would teach disciples all things (John 14:26) and guide into all truth (16:13). Thus, the goal of spiritual formation is that Christ is formed in us (Galatians 4:19).

DISCUSS: *Why is it important that God changes us from the inside out rather than from the outside in?*

C. I will submit to the work of the Holy Spirit.

If we reduce our faith to a performance checklist and rely on self instead of the Spirit, we miss the powerful message of Galatians. There are no substitutions for submission. We submit to the Spirit by responding to conviction instead of silencing it. When the Word of God provokes us to change from the inside out, we obey. We allow God to remove destructive influences and habits from our lives without resenting His correction. Like a father disciplines a son he loves, God disciplines his children (Hebrews 12:6). The challenge to change is a signal of God's love, not His rejection.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S FRUITFULNESS

A. Fruit as a Blessing to Others

Those who are led by the Spirit will naturally produce the fruit of the Spirit. Spirit-filled, Spirit-led people produce love. Just as God is love, we are partakers of His divine nature, receiving and revealing His love. The love of God exceeds imagination and enables us to love those deemed unlovable.

Spirit-filled, Spirit-led people produce joy. Despite facing fiery trials and frequent afflictions, Spirit-led people possess an unquenched flame of delight and contentment in God. Because the Spirit is the source, the world cannot rob our joy. Spirit-filled, Spirit-led people have peace. Not only is the peace of God a state of the heart and mind, but we can be at peace with others and live as peacemakers.

Spirit-filled, Spirit-led people are longsuffering. Longsuffering is the virtue no one wants but everyone needs. To endure extended trials without losing hope is a grace from God. In the flesh, we would fragment. With the Spirit, we can flourish. Spirit-filled, Spirit-led people are gentle. In a world that is often harsh, sarcastic, and hardened, we are able to be gentle because God has been gentle with us.

Spirit-filled, Spirit-led people produce goodness. They choose what is good and do what is right. Just as God is good to the evil and the righteous, children of God do good to those who hate them (Matthew 5:44). Spirit-filled, Spirit-led people produce faith. The Spirit cultivates and expands our faith, so we are able to believe for unseen miracles.

Spirit-filled, Spirit-led people are meek—humble in their approach and wise in their communication. The meek speak the truth with boldness, yet resist being provocative for the sake of provocation. Spirit-filled, Spirit-led people are temperate. They are not ruled by their passions. Their passions are governed by the Spirit.

DISCUSS: *If you could have more of one fruit of the Spirit, what would you want most?*

The fruit of the Spirit is a direct contrast to the works of the flesh. The world pursues carnal pleasure, objectifying and using others, yet those who are led by the Spirit have genuine love. The world engages in demonic spirituality—witchcraft and idolatry. Those who are led by the Spirit live by faith. The world resolves conflict through wrath and strife. Spirit-led people conduct themselves peacefully, communicating with gentleness and meekness. The world loses control in drunken, wild parties and violent acts. Spirit-led people are controlled and stable. There is no law against the fruit of the Spirit; they are universally acknowledged virtues. In a chaotic world, the fruit of the Spirit witnesses to the power and ongoing presence of the Spirit.

B. The Need to Live Spirit-filled and Spirit-led

Paul issued a sharp warning to the church: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). Those who sow to the flesh will reap a harvest of death. Those who sow to the Spirit will reap everlasting life. Following the Spirit’s lead and denying the flesh have eternal benefits.

In this life, we bear the fruit of a transformed character. Yet the harvest is greater than this. The promise of resurrection is well worth the wait between seasons and the labor of tending. Our efforts will be honored if we do not give up on the Spirit’s work (verse 9).

(V) PLAY VIDEO NOW

C. I will live Spirit-filled and Spirit-led.

If you have never received the gift of the Spirit, the promise is for everyone through faith (Galatians 3:14). Receiving the Spirit starts us on a new path that leads to life. However, it is not enough to initially receive the Spirit if we neglect its power in our lives. Turning away from the Spirit-led life to self-made righteousness makes the cross's power ineffective (Galatians 5:4). We need grace, we need real change, and we need the Spirit's guidance. Just as we invite the Spirit to fill our hearts, we must remain open to the Spirit to change our lives.

TEACHER OPTION: *Share the story below or one of your own to illustrate the need to walk in the Spirit.*

APPLY

TRANSPORTATION AND TECHNOLOGY seem to have made the world smaller. If a plane could travel without stopping, a commercial passenger aircraft could encircle the world in approximately forty-two hours. Steve Fossett, an American adventurer, made history in 2005 by completing the first nonstop solo aircraft trip around the world in sixty-seven hours.

The record for fastest land speed is 763 mph. When Andy Green set the record in 1997 in Black Rock Desert, Nevada, he broke the sound barrier. He was operating a twin jet-powered supersonic car, and his speed caused an earthquake scare in Gerlach, Nevada—a town ten miles away.

(I) **DISPLAY IMAGE NOW**

But not everyone has a need for speed. For former paratrooper Karl Bushby, walking retains its charm. In 1998, Bushby began his Goliath Expedition—a trip of over 36,000 miles from Chile back to his home in Hull, United Kingdom. When he could help it, Bushby refused to travel in any machine, so he has traveled on foot, often using a handcart to carry his meager belongings.

Bushby has walked across Asia and American continents and swum 186 miles across the Caspian Sea. The swim was a thirty-one-day venture through freezing water, in which Bushby, at over fifty years of age, paddled through ice chunks with a gun strapped to his back in case of polar bear attacks. He crossed the Bering Strait on foot, crossing fifty-six frozen miles in fifteen days, only to be detained by officials at the Russian border. The journey was meant to last twelve years but has lasted nearly thirty, with Bushby walking through the tenures of five prime ministers, visa delays, financial crises, numerous wars, and a pandemic.

In addition to being a British veteran, world-record breaker, and chronic pedestrian, Bushby is slated to be the world's most inefficient mailman. At the start of his adventure, a Chilean doctor gave him fifty dollars and a postcard to deliver to his brother in Vienna, Austria, which at the time of this writing, he has yet to deliver.

Throughout his travels, Bushby has appreciated the hospitality of many cultures, stating, "The world is not as scary as you might think. . . . Even in the places you might not expect, I have found kind and generous people. In Peru, I was welcomed into homes, literally built from cardboard, to share a bowl of rice."

Like Bushby, Spirit-led people are long-term walkers. Paul's instructions in Galatians about the Spirit-filled, Spirit-led life are bookended by exhortations to walk in, or keep in step with, the Spirit. Walking isn't about rushing or competing, but a steady forward movement. The Spirit sets the pace and selects the path; we simply have to keep going. Walking in the Spirit is a beautiful experience, marked by mountaintop moments, scenic sights, profound conversations, and a deep sense of being known by the God who walks with us. Though the walk is delightful, the destination exceeds the journey. Keep walking the Spirit-led walk. We're almost home.