

# Sanctification

## THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT FOR SANCTIFICATION

Focal Verses • GALATIANS 5:16–26

### Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: EXPLORE the freedoms gained when “walking by the Spirit;” DESIRE the personal and relational qualities of a Spirit-led life; and SUPPORT one another in living a life centered on Jesus Christ.

### In Focus

Since the day they met in high school, Chanel and Breana had been best friends. They were inseparable at proms, birthdays, and college. As adults, they started going to church together and became Christians at the same time. Chanel, who had always been more outgoing, immediately started serving in church auxiliaries, while Breana shied away from getting to know their new church family. Although Chanel was making new friends, she and Breana had become even closer because they now shared a deep love for Christ.

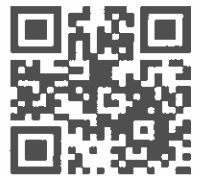
When Chanel got married and moved away, Breana felt so alone. She started to isolate herself. Breana began to feel like God had abandoned her. Chanel could hear the sadness in Breana’s voice whenever they’d talk on the phone. Breana said, “I wish I could be more extroverted like you. It’s not that I don’t like people. I just wish I knew where my talents could fit.”

“You have a lot of gifts, Breana. One thing that comes to mind is the gift of patience,” Chanel said. “God always knows how to use His people as He sanctifies us. I’ve got an idea to help, if you don’t mind.”

Chanel called her friend Sister Selena at the church and asked her to pray for Breana. Chanel and a group of women prayed that God would lead Breana to find her fit in the church as she sought to live a life centered on Jesus Christ. Chanel and the women even stopped by Breana’s home to tell her they’d been thinking about her. To this day, Breana, Chanel, and the group of women still meet weekly for prayer and support. Breana’s Christian walk is stronger than ever because her fellow believers reached out to her in love.

*Chanel said, “God always knows how to use His people as He sanctifies us.” How have you seen God using your talents as you have sought to live a life centered on Christ?*

SCAN FOR VIDEO



### Keep in Mind

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”  
(Galatians 5:25, KJV)

## Focal Verses

**KJV** Galatians 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

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

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

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

## The People, Places, and Times

**Fruit.** Most of the time, we cannot recognize a fruit from only its seed. Only after seeds are planted in the ground and start sprouting do we know what type of fruit has been planted. Fruit is used metaphorically in Scripture to illustrate this fact. We do not know the power at work in people's lives until we see the fruit that power produces. In Scripture, fruit (works or deeds) is the sign of God's power moving within a person. Sin produces fruit (works) of the flesh, but the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of believers.

**Early Church Identity.** The Roman government viewed first-century Christianity as merely a sect of Judaism because the church was still searching for its identity, and many in the first-century churches identified as Jews (according to their ancestry). Many Christians in fact still worshiped in the Jewish synagogues. The first believers did not even call themselves Christians, but "followers of the Way." Antioch was where the term "Christian" was first used (Acts 11:26). As increasing numbers of Gentiles became believers, due largely to Paul's

endeavors, the necessity of observing the Mosaic Law came into question.

Paul reflected that our righteousness being based on Christ's righteousness and received as a gift was the foundation of the Christian faith. This marked the separation of Christianity from Judaism. In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he consistently emphasizes the difference between being enslaved by the Law and being free in the Holy Spirit as a means to teach the true Gospel and solidify the church's identity.

## Background

The apostle Paul challenged the believers of his day to learn what every believer today would do well to remember: the key to making progress in the realm of Christian freedom is to keep walking in the Spirit.

Paul is very much aware of the Galatians' need for a power that the law could not give. He realized from personal experience (see Romans 7), that there are some things the law cannot do (8:3). Rules and regulations can command, but they cannot empower one to do what is commanded. Rules and regulations serve as a

guide or a road map, but they cannot motivate and enable one to follow the directions and guidance given.

If the Galatians were to live free from sin's power to control their lives, if they were to fulfill the law, it would be because they surrendered themselves to the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Only those who have surrendered and who keep on surrendering themselves to the complete control of the Spirit are empowered to walk according to the Spirit's orders.

Paul was convinced of the Spirit's sufficiency to guide and strengthen believers to live righteously. Moreover, he was convinced that the Spirit is always present to guide and strengthen believers in their warfare against the desires of the flesh. Paul's message to the Galatians called them to be careful to follow the marching orders of the Spirit. Those who march by the Spirit's orders will not—and indeed cannot—fulfill the desires of the flesh. “This I say then,” wrote Paul, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

## At-A-Glance

1. Works of the Flesh (Galatians 5:16–21)
2. The Fruit of the Spirit (vv. 22–26)

## In Depth

### 1. Works of the Flesh (Galatians 5:16–21)

Today's lesson begins in the midst of Paul's attempt to convince the Galatians to not become enslaved by the Law, which—unlike the Holy Spirit—was not intended to save, but rather to shed light on sin (Romans 3:20). Paul informs the Galatians that those led by the Spirit (i.e., those under the continual guidance of and in abiding relationship with the Spirit) are no longer subject to the Law, nor can be condemned by it (Romans 8:1).

The question would follow then, “How does one go about following the Spirit, but not the Law and not the world?” Those listening to Paul had been used to thinking of the world in two groups: those who sinned and those who followed the Law. Now that Paul has told them not to follow the Law, he must explain that they aren't supposed to follow the world either. Instead, the Spirit is unique from both the world and the Law (vv. 17–18).

It turns out, Paul tells the Galatians, that following the Spirit will end up looking a lot like following the Law. The things God already told His people not to do, they still should not do. Paul uses a vice list (a convention of Greco Roman moral rhetoric) to emphasize that those who continually practice these sins will not inherit the kingdom of God. On this list we see items that we might consider “big sins” like idolatry, heresy, and murder. But we also see sins that you and I might commit on a regular basis: hatred, strife, or drunkenness. All sins are equal before God, for any sin means that we have decided to set ourselves against God's protective Law, thinking we know better.

*What are some other sins that we might not think to put on a list alongside murder and idolatry?*

### 2. The Fruit of the Spirit (vv. 22–26)

The works of the flesh contrast the fruit of the Spirit. The word “fruit” denotes an organic growth that stems from the believer's relationship with Christ. The first fruit listed is love. It is also the virtue upon which all the other fruit are based (1 Corinthians 13:1–3). In essence, the operation of the Holy Spirit is love manifested in believers' lives; there is no law against love.

Followers of Christ still struggle with sinful human desires, but strive to do good. Instead of following the Law and covering their sin with an animal sacrifice, Paul uses the image of believers nailing their sins to Christ's Cross. Instead of

trusting the Law to cover up their faults, they trust in the Cross to pay them off once and for all.

Paul adds that if believers live by the Spirit, they should walk in the Spirit. In other words, believers should be in one accord in following the Spirit instead of giving in to competition or jealousy. So much trouble comes when we compare our Christian lives to that of others. Our insecurities lead us to think it's not fair for someone to be higher than we are, so we envy them or we try to bring them down. We might also lord our seeming height over another, provoking them to jealousy or spiteful action. Such things are also of the world just as much as witchcraft, heresy, and murder are.

*How do you remind yourself that your sinfulness was nailed to the Cross?*

### Search the Scriptures

1. Why does Paul compare and contrast the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:19–26)?

2. What significance do you see in the order in which Paul lists the Spirit's fruit (vv. 22–23)?

### Discuss the Meaning

We often think holy living is only a personal endeavor. However, God wants us to live in the Spirit as a community.

1. How do the works of the flesh undermine the Christian community?

2. How does the fruit of the Spirit unify us?

### Liberating Lesson

From the moment we're born, laws govern our lives. Babies must have birth certificates. Children must go to school. Drive on green. Stop on red. Most people try to follow the law to the letter. It's easy for us to look at the fruit of the Spirit as more laws to follow. The Lord desires that our

lives reflect the fruit, but not in legalistic ways. Our lives should be an outpouring of our love for Christ and our desire to serve one another.

### Application for Activation

We have many opportunities to do good in this world. The question is, what should we do? Create a plan to exhibit at least one fruit of the Spirit each day of the week. Come back and report to the class the challenges and rewards.

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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### Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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#### Sources:

- Braxton, Brad. "Galatians" in *True To Our Native Land*, eds. Brian K. Blount, Cain Hope Felder, Clarice J. Martin, and Emerson B. Powery. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007. 333–347.
- Schriener, Tom. *Galatians: ZEGCNT*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
- Wright, N. T. "Faith, Virtue, Justification and the Journey to Freedom." *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology Sparked in Honor of Richard B. Hays*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008. 472–497.

## Say It Correctly

Lasciviousness. lah-**SI**-vee-us-nēs.

Variance. **VA**-ree-ens.

Emulations. em-yoo-**LAY**-shuns.

## Daily Bible Readings

### DAY 274

John 2:1–25

Psalms 110

### DAY 275

John 3:1–36

Psalms 111

### DAY 276

John 4:1–54

Psalms 112

### DAY 277

John 5:1–47

Psalms 113

### DAY 278

John 6:1–40

Psalms 114

### DAY 279

John 6:41–71

Psalms 115

### DAY 280

John 7:1–53

Psalms 116

## Notes

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