

OPENING ILLUSTRATION

- › You've probably heard the saying, "Garbage in, garbage out." The idea is that if the inputs are bad, the outputs will be bad, too. This applies to almost anything. If you eat poorly, your body won't function as well as it could. If you don't get enough sleep, you won't have the energy you need to be at your best. If you don't exercise, you'll get out of shape. If you don't study, your grades will suffer. And if you don't read the Bible, pray, go to church, and do the things that help you stay connected to God, you will be more susceptible to temptation and sin. The reality is, if you're not transforming your mind with God's truth, you will eventually start believing lies. And believing lies isn't harmless. Believing lies leads to sin, and sin has consequences. In the second half of Galatians 5, Paul describes the vast difference between walking by the Spirit and walking by the flesh. He says these two ways of thinking and living are diametrically opposed to each other. We need to understand the battle we're in.

CONTEXT

- › Having finished up the bulk of his long argument for justification by faith in the first half of Galatians 5, Paul finishes the chapter contrasting walking by the Spirit and walking by the flesh. He says there is a constant battle going on between the competing desires of the Spirit and the flesh. Sometimes Christians give in to the flesh, but it is not what we really want to do. We are indwelt by the Spirit and God has given us a new identity, so when we think and act in ways contrary to the Bible, we're acting against who we really are and what we really believe. A couple of times Paul mentions that those who walk by the Spirit are not under law. As he has been saying throughout this letter, a Christian is a Christian through faith, not through obedience to the law.

EXPOSITORY OUTLINE

The following are suggested sermon points for each verse or section of verses for a large group setting.

- › Galatians 5:16-18. *Walk by the Spirit and you won't fall into sin.* Focusing on not sinning is not the best way to avoid it. The best way to avoid sin is to focus on Jesus. The Spirit of God constantly points us to Jesus and the gospel. When we listen to Him through the Word, there's no room for sin.
- › Galatians 5:19-21. *The works of the flesh are obvious and disastrous.* Reading through the works of the flesh can make you wonder why we ever give in to temptation. Sin is destructive. It doesn't make people happy, at least not for long. Ultimately, a person dominated by the works of the flesh will not go to heaven. Their choices reveal their heart.
- › Galatians 5:22-26. *The fruit of the Spirit describes the life God intends for His people.* God desires for His people to be full of love, joy, peace, and the rest. With the Spirit's help, Christians put to death ungodly works of the flesh and walk according to the Spirit, bearing His fruit for the blessing of the world and the glory of God.

GROUP DISCUSSION

The following are suggested discussion questions on each verse or section of verses for leading a small group session. These are also useful in sermon deliveries that include discussion:

ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 5:16-18.

- › **What does it mean to "walk by the Spirit"? In practical terms, what does that look like?**
- › **Why does Paul say that we sometimes don't do what we want? What kind of internal battle do we face? How can we win the battle? How does God help us win the battle?**
- › **Why does Paul say that if we're led by the Spirit we're not under law? Does that mean it doesn't matter if we obey the law of God?**



ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 5:19-21.

- › Read through the list of the works of the flesh. Why are we tempted to do things that make us miserable and hurt others?
- › Do you think our culture glorifies many of these things? If so, why? Where do we see these things normalized in culture?
- › How serious is the call to fight sin in our lives? How does God's forgiveness relate to the call for holiness?

ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 5:22-26.

- › Why does the text say "fruit" of the Spirit instead of "fruits" of the Spirit. Can you only have a few of these characteristics?
- › Are there and desires in your life that need to "crucified," as Paul puts it? What strategy should you take to overcome temptation?
- › How do we "follow the Spirit"? Where does He lead us?

SESSION CONNECTION

- › In Session 11, students read the story of Samson losing his strength because he gave into temptation (Judg. 16). Samson's desire for Delilah caused him to temporarily lose his mind and make terrible decisions that were destructive to both himself and God's people. Sin can cause us to make stupid decisions, too. Perhaps the worst mistake we can make is to underestimate the power of temptation and the damage that sin causes. God has a great mission and plan for our lives, so we must do everything we can to avoid the sins that can take us off track. If Samson's story is a case study in the power of sin and temptation, Paul's words in Galatians 5 can be the antidote to avoiding the destructive power of sin. He explains the battle we're in, and encourages us to walk by the Spirit's power.

OBJECT LESSON/APPLICATION

- › Navy Seals often say, "discipline leads to freedom." The Seals are known for their supreme discipline. They go through an incredibly challenging training period to before they're accepted into the group. The training toughens them up and prepares them for almost anything. Under duress, they can tap into their training. They have paid the price to have deep resources of knowledge and experience. As we think about battling against temptation and sin, we need to be able to tap into the resource of a renewed mind. We need to think like God and not like the world. Thankfully, the Spirit helps us. He applies the Word of God to our hearts, making it real and powerful in us.

The mission God has given us requires fighting temptation and uprooting sin.

- › <https://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/transferable-concepts/walk-in-the-spirit.html> – Bill Bright discusses what it means to "walk by the spirit" and how we can be sure we are doing so.
- › <http://www.covenanteyes.com/2014/10/31/apostle-pauls-secret-fighting-sexual-sin/>– Luke Gilkerson shares five keys to overcoming sexual temptation.

* These websites are not affiliated with LifeWay. Consult with your church's leadership before including these in your session to be sure that your church's values allow their materials to be referenced in your session time.