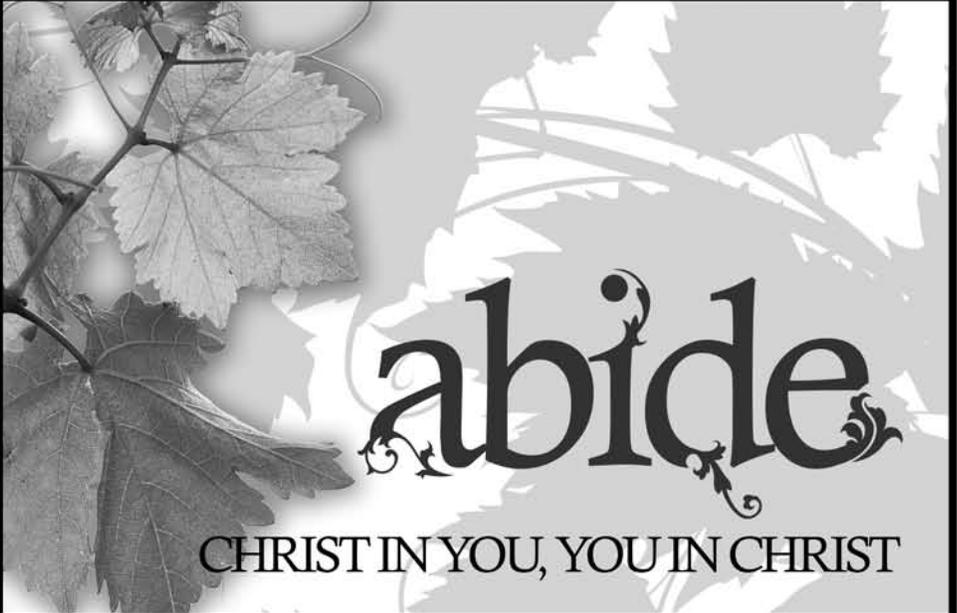




SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY



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CHRIST IN YOU, YOU IN CHRIST



LESSON 7

Walking in the Spirit

Key Text: John 15:9-17; cross-references

Introduction

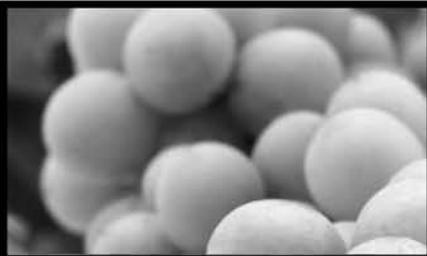
The purpose of the “Abide” series has been to learn through Scripture that intimacy with Jesus Christ is the only way that we can live out God’s purpose for our lives. Throughout the Parable of the Vine in John 15, Christ reminded His disciples that apart from Him, they could do nothing. We have seen how important it is to abide in Christ through His Word and prayer—not because we “have to,” but because it is a way to spend time with Christ, getting to know His heart and aligning ourselves with His purposes and plans.

We have also learned that God is the loving gardener who “lifts us up” during seasons of barrenness in order to make us fruitful, and “prunes” us during fruitful seasons to bring forth more fruit from our lives. Because of this truth we can rejoice, even in hardships, because we know that whatever tests or trials God allows into our lives is for the purpose of making us fruitful.

In John 15:16, Jesus told His disciples that He appointed them for the purpose of bearing fruit that will last. Doing so brings glory to God. When others see in us the fruit of a Christlike character, God is glorified through our lives. As we abide, we receive the power and the life of the Vine. This is not only for our own good, but also for the good of those around us who need Christ. As we remain in Him, Christ empowers us through His Spirit to bear lasting fruit by making disciples as we choose to pour our lives into others.

Before you begin this week’s lesson, lead your group in a quick review of last week’s lesson on abiding in Christ through prayer. Use the following questions as you review.

- 1) What is Christ’s promise to us regarding prayer found in John 15:7?
- 2) What conditions did we find in Scripture for receiving whatever we ask for in prayer?



- 3) How did Jesus teach His disciples to pray in Matthew 6:9-13?
- 4) Briefly explain this model Jesus taught them.

Christ's words to His disciples in John 15:5 were absolute: "Apart from Me you can do nothing." Think about the context in which Jesus said these words. He was days away from dying on the cross, and weeks away from returning to His position at God's right hand in heaven. And yet He says, "Apart from Me you can do nothing."

Jesus Was Departing...

The disciples were appointed to bear fruit. And yet they are branches that must remain in the Vine in order to do so. But their Vine was about to leave the earth. So how were they going to be able to remain (abide) in Christ and bear fruit? Jesus isn't only teaching them about their need for intimacy with Him in these last days before His death. He also is using these last precious moments with His disciples to pave the way for the One who was coming from the Father to be with His disciples after He returned to heaven. The Father was sending someone to be with them, who would keep them connected to God and to Christ. This is how they would "remain" in Christ—through the promised Holy Spirit.

Opening Prayer

Begin your time in study of God's Word by praying for your group. Pray that God will open the heart of every person and reveal Himself to you all in a new way as you study and discuss His Word together. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you into the truth and show you all how to apply what you learn to your lives in a practical way. And pray that God will be glorified through your discussion today.

Key Study

We were never intended to live the Christian life on our own. We cannot earn salvation. We cannot will to become like Christ. And we cannot make disciples of all nations through human effort. We simply cannot live a life that honors God in our own strength. God has been trying to tell us this truth since the beginning of time. When sin separated us from God, He already had a plan to redeem (buy back) us to Himself. When the time was perfect, He sent us a Savior and His name is Jesus Christ. He lived a perfect life as a man, took our sins upon Himself when He willingly gave up His life on the cross, and made a way for us to once again have a relationship with God through faith in Him. This is something we could never have done on our own.

Because of Christ's sacrifice, when a sinner repents of his sin and surrenders his life to God, confessing Jesus as his Savior and Lord, God forgives him and places him "in Christ" forever. God knew we needed a Savior, so He sent His Son. But what happens after we place our faith in Christ? Are we all of the sudden able to live the Christian life on our own since we've been forgiven and declared righteous? Not according to Jesus. He said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing."

Disconnected From God's Power?

Jesus knew that once He left the earth, His disciples would be helpless to bear fruit, no matter how much they wanted and tried to do so. Why? Because Christ was their connection on earth to God's power. When they were with Christ, they had access to the power of God to glorify Him on earth. They had Christ physically with them, pouring His life into theirs and teaching them what the Father wanted them to know. He was their teacher and their guide, leading them into the great mysteries of God. All authority had been given to

Christ on earth, and He gave authority to the disciples during His time with them so that they could join in His ministry (Matthew 10:1). With Christ leading them and helping them, they could participate in God's work on earth.

So how would they "remain in Christ" after He was gone? How would they stay connected to the power and presence of God so that they could continue to bear fruit? They would no longer be in need of a Savior, since Christ would finish that work before He returned to heaven. They had placed their faith in Him, leaving everything to follow Him. What they would need, however, was a helper. They would need someone to connect them to Christ and to the Father, so they could continue to have access to His power, presence, and authority in order to glorify Him on earth.

Christ knew what they needed. Acts 1:4-5 says, "On one occasion, while He (Jesus) was eating with them, He gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" Christ told His disciples before He was crucified that He would not leave them alone. He told them that God was sending help for them, to be with them forever.

Apart from Christ...

Christ's disciples knew that they could do nothing apart from Christ's presence in their lives. They had been living life with Him for three years, witnessing first-hand His power and authority. They also saw His connection with the Father. The disciples knew that without Christ's help, guidance, and power, they would be useless to God's kingdom.

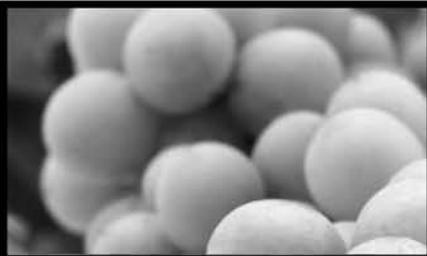
Do we know that today? Do we understand as believers that apart from Christ we can do nothing? Nothing. Christ said that word. We are a completely useless branch that will never bear fruit in our own power, but when we abide in Him, we will bear lasting fruit for His kingdom. We will never fully understand and appreciate the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives if we do not first believe Christ's words in John 15—apart from Him we can do nothing. Look at the following passage.

John 15:9-17

"As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name. This is My command: Love each other."

If this passage doesn't show us our need for help in living the Christian life, what else will? Look at Christ's commands to His disciples: Remain in My love, obey My commands, love each other as I have loved you, bear fruit that will last, and love one another. This passage reminds us again of our desperate need for the power and presence of Christ in our lives. Not only do we need Him for salvation; but we continue to need Him every minute of every day. Intimacy with Christ through the Holy Spirit is our only hope of fulfilling Christ's command to remain in His love.





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Leading Your Group Through John 15

Have your group open their Bible and turn to John 15:9-17. Have someone read it aloud. Using the commentary above, introduce the foundation for today's lesson—the disciples' need for a helper as well as our need today for a helper. Using the following questions, lead your group in a discussion of John 15:9-17.

- 1) What are all of the commands that Christ gives His disciples in this passage?
- 2) According to verse 10, how do we remain in His love?
- 3) According to verse 14, what is the proof that we are Christ's friends?
- 4) Based on verses 10 and 14, how important is obedience in the life of a believer?
- 5) What reason does Jesus give for calling His disciples friends in verse 15?
- 6) According to this passage, who made the Father known to the disciples? Could they know God on their own?
- 7) Why did Christ choose and appoint His disciples according to verse 16?
- 8) Do you think it is possible for someone to fulfill Christ's commands in this passage apart from God's power? Why or why not?
- 9) Review what Christ told His disciples in John 15:4-5.
- 10) What was about to happen to Jesus when He told this parable?
- 11) What problem did this create for the disciples based on what Jesus said in verses 4-5?

"The Helper"

We are going to spend the next part of the lesson digging into Scripture to see what Jesus told His disciples about the helper that the Father was sending them. What would be His purpose in their lives? What would He do for them? These are important questions because the same applies to us today. God sends the Holy Spirit to every believer. Just as the Holy Spirit would be the disciples' connection to Christ and to God after Jesus left the earth, He is also our connection to Christ and to God. The Holy Spirit is how we are able to abide in Christ's love.

John 14:15-21

"If you love Me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see Me anymore, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you. Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him."

John 14:25-26

"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

A Counselor

Again in this passage we see Jesus saying that those who love Him will obey His commands. This is not a way to earn salvation, it is the result of salvation. When we place our faith in Christ, God sends the Holy Spirit to live in us. The Spirit brings the power of God that we need in order to be able to obey Christ's commands, bearing fruit for His glory. Obedience is evidence that we are truly Christ-followers. Notice that Jesus calls the Holy Spirit "another Counselor" in verse 16, and calls Him "Counselor" again in verse 26. In order to understand

the significance of this, we need to see what the definition of “Counselor” is in this passage. It is the Greek word *parakletos*, and it means: “Summoned, called to one’s side, one who pleads another’s cause, an intercessor, helper, aider, assistant, defense, legal assistant, advocate.” Doesn’t this definition describe exactly what Jesus had been for His disciples while He lived on the earth? He had been their advocate before God, their defender, intercessor, and helper. Christ is the one that God “summoned to our side” to “plead our case” before Him.

Now Christ tells His disciples in verse 16 that He is going to ask the Father to send “another Counselor.” Christ has been our Counselor in coming to salvation, and the Holy Spirit is our Counselor in living out our salvation. He is our helper, advocate, and our assistant in bearing fruit. Notice in verse 17 that Christ tells His disciples that they know this Spirit because He “lives with you.” How had God’s Spirit lived “with” the disciples? Through Christ living with them because God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all one. So by living “with” Christ, they had been living “with” the Holy Spirit. Soon, however, the Spirit will be “in you” (verse 17).

Teacher and Reminder

Verse 20 shows us that the Holy Spirit is how we are united (connected) to God and to Christ. Verse 26 also says that the Holy Spirit is our teacher and our reminder. Christ had taught them while He was with them, and the Holy Spirit would continue that work in their lives:

Romans 8:26-27

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”

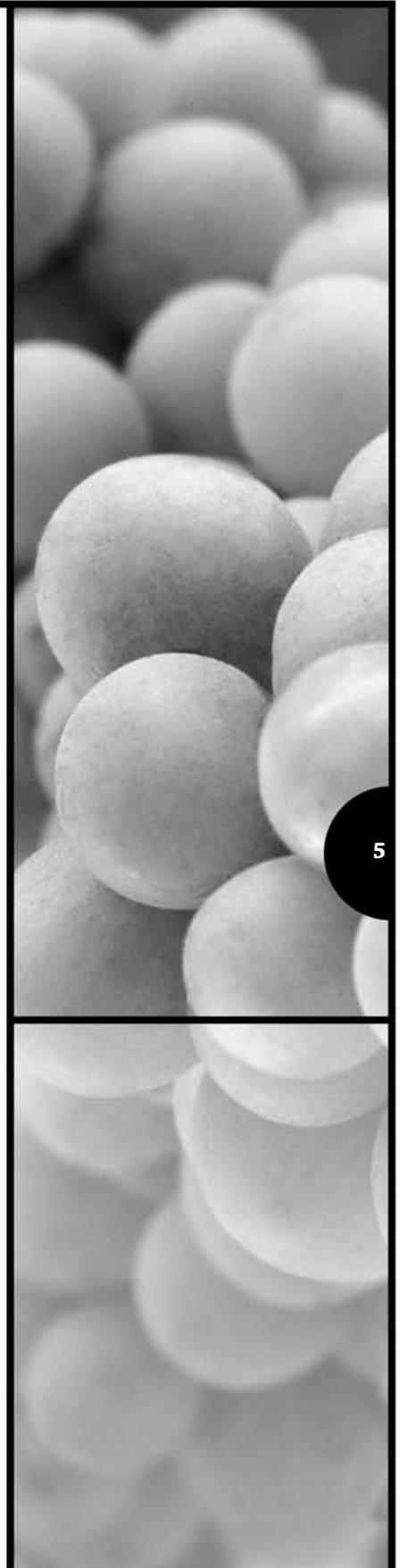
Intercessor

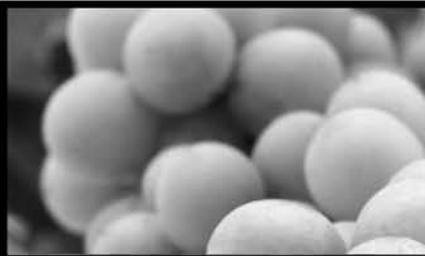
Do you remember what we studied about prayer last week? If we pray according to God’s will, He will give us whatever we ask. This passage teaches us that the Holy Spirit is our intercessor, and He prays according to God’s will. When we do not know what to pray, He intercedes for us:

John 16:5-15

“Now I am going to Him who sent Me, yet none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going? Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in Me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see Me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is Mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is Mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is Mine and make it known to you.”

In this passage, Christ makes a shocking statement to His disciples. In verse 7 He says, “I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, The Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.” The disciples were probably thinking, “What!? What do You mean it’s for our good that You go away? How could anything be better for us than You here with





us?” Think about Christ’s statement. In the previous passage (John 14:15-20) Christ told the disciples that they had been living *with* the Holy Spirit, but soon the Spirit would live *in* them. Unless Christ went away, the Holy Spirit would not be sent to live in them.

Empowered to Continue Christ’s Ministry

God’s presence had been with them through Christ’s presence on earth, but what they needed now was for God’s presence to be *in them*, empowering them to continue Christ’s ministry. Christ was God’s ambassador on earth, sent not only to die on the cross for our sins, but to pour His life into a few men, showing them the way to God. His plan was one of multiplication. When Christ returned to heaven, it became these men’s responsibility, and ours, to continue Christ’s ministry on God’s behalf. We are now His ambassadors, and God makes His appeal through our lives to the world, “Be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Notice also in verses 8-11 that another reason the Holy Spirit was coming was to convict the world of guilt in regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment. In verse 13 Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will not speak on His own, but will give the disciples the words of the Father. Notice again the similarity between what Christ had done for the disciples as their Counselor, and what the Holy Spirit would do as their Counselor. In John 17:8 Jesus prayed: “*For I gave them the words You (God) gave Me and they accepted them.*” Christ has been their teacher and guide, making known to them the words of God. Now, the Holy Spirit would continue that work. This will bring glory to Jesus (verse 14).

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

This passage teaches us where our power comes from to live out Christ’s mission to make disciples of all nations. The Holy Spirit not only brings the presence of God, but also puts the power of God into our lives.

Understanding More About the Holy Spirit

Break your class into 3 groups for the following assignment. Remember, the exercise can “scale” to your group—for 6-12 people, it’s fine to have groups of 2 or 3 folks, or even “groups” of one. Give each group one strip of paper with the following passages:

Group One: John 14: 15-21; John 14:25-26

Group Two: Romans 8:26-27; Acts 1:8

Group Three: John 16:5-15

Tell each group to look up their assigned passage(s) and read them together. Their assignment is to discuss the verses and make a list of all of the ways that the passage shows how the Holy Spirit helps believers to abide (remain connected to) Christ.

Give them about 10 minutes to complete the assignment and then allow each group to read their passage(s) aloud to the class and share what they learned. As each group shares their list, make a list on the board that shows how the Holy Spirit is our connection to Christ. Use the commentary above to clarify or add to the discussion.

“Living In the Spirit”

Now that we have seen how the Holy Spirit is the One who makes it possible for us to abide, let’s look at some Scripture to help us understand how to live in the power of the Holy Spirit instead of trying to bear fruit in our own power. Just because the Holy Spirit is living in someone doesn’t mean that the Holy Spirit is controlling him. We as believers must choose daily, moment by moment, to “walk in the Spirit.” In other words, we must choose to give control to the Spirit and not to our flesh. When the Holy Spirit doesn’t control us, we will not bear fruit because the Spirit is our connection to the Vine. He is the “sap” that flows from the Vine to the branches.

Ephesians 5:18

“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”

Acts 6:3

“Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them...”

Both of these passages were written to believers, and yet they say to be “filled” with the Spirit, and to find men who are “full” of the Spirit. Believers already have the Holy Spirit because God sends Him to live in us the moment we place our faith in Christ. So what do these verses mean? The meaning of the word “full” here is, “Hollow vessels; covered in every part; thoroughly permeated with.” In this context to believers, being “filled” means to be controlled by the Spirit.

A Contrast

In Ephesians 5:18, Paul is contrasting being drunk with wine to being “filled” with the Spirit. Being “controlled” by wine leads to debauchery. These verses show us that it is possible to be inhabited by the Holy Spirit, meaning that He lives in you, and yet not be controlled by the Spirit. This is evident in Acts 6:3 as they are looking for men “among the brothers” who are “full of the Spirit.” We have already learned in earlier lessons that it is possible to be “in Christ” through salvation, and yet not be abiding in Him. This is the same principle. We must choose to yield control of our lives to the Holy Spirit every day. Just because the Spirit is alive in us doesn’t mean we are bearing fruit through His power. We must surrender to His leadership, and then we will abide and bear fruit.

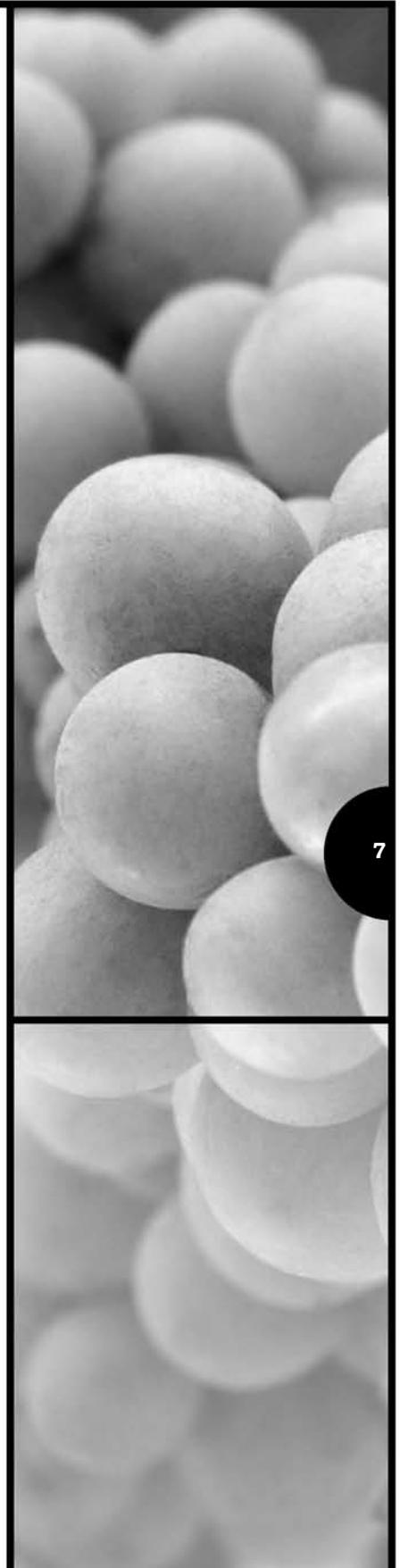
Have your group turn in their Bibles to Ephesians 5:18 and Acts 6:3 as someone reads them aloud. After you have read the verses, use the commentary to explain to the group how these verses show us that we can be inhabited by the Holy Spirit, and yet not “filled” (controlled) by Him. Be sure to share the Greek definition of “full.”

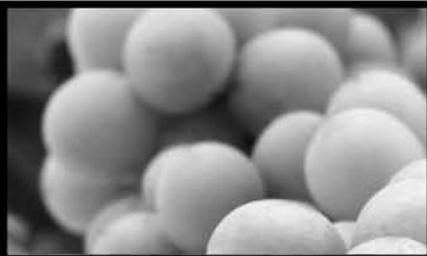
Now, break into two smaller groups. Assign each group one of the following passages:

Romans 8:5-17

Galatians 5:16-25

Their assignment is to read the passages and discuss what they learn from them about the sinful nature and the Spirit. Give them a few minutes to discuss the passages and then bring them back together to discuss what they learned. Feel free to give the groups the Greek definitions that pertain to their passage that are listed in the commentary that follows if you’d like.





Use the commentary below, especially the Greek definitions, to guide the discussion and further clarify what the verses mean as the groups share what they learned.

Romans 8:5-17

“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.”

Sinful Mind Versus The Spirit

Verses 5-8 of this passage contrast living according to the sinful nature with living according to the Spirit. We see that the sinful nature brings death, but the Spirit brings life and peace. The sinful mind is hostile to God and cannot please Him (cannot bear fruit). Those without the Spirit do not belong to Christ. In verse 10 we see the conflict within believers because of the Spirit and the flesh. Paul writes, *“Your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.”* The dead body and the living spirit are in opposition to one another. Christ said, *“The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak”* (Matthew 26:41).

In verse 12 Paul says that we have an obligation—not to the sinful nature, but to the Spirit. Verse 13 shows us that it is the Spirit of Christ in us that enables us not to act according to sinful desires. It says, *“...if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.”* We have a choice to exercise the power of the Holy Spirit in us and choose not to gratify the sinful desires of our flesh.

Verses 14-17 remind us that we are God’s children. The Spirit we have received is not one of fear, but one of adoption. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are able to call God Father. Verse 16 says the Holy Spirit living in us testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. And if we are God’s children, then we are co-heirs with Christ.

Galatians 5:16-25

“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before,

that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

This passage also shows us the conflict between the Spirit of Christ living in us and the desires of our sinful nature. Verse 16 says to "live by the Spirit" and the result will be that you won't gratify the desires of the sinful nature. The word "live" in verse 16 is translated "walk by the Spirit" in the King James Bible. It is the Greek word *peripateo*, and it means, "Make one's way; conduct one's self." Verse 16 is saying, "Conduct yourself by the Spirit, and you will not give in to the desires of the sinful nature."

A Choice

We have a choice how we conduct ourselves. Will we walk through life according to the sinful nature, or according to the Spirit of Christ. Verse 17 says that the Spirit and the flesh will always be in conflict with one another. The acts of the sinful nature are listed in verses 19-21, followed by a warning that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. The fruit of the Spirit is listed in verses 22-23.

Notice that it doesn't say "fruits" of the Spirit (plural) but "fruit" of the Spirit (singular). There is one fruit, and it is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Anyone who has the Holy Spirit living in him can bear this fruit. You don't get "part" of the fruit. The Spirit brings the power to bear all of these. These aren't "spiritual gifts." It is fruit that is borne through our lives if we choose to "walk" by the Spirit.

Conclusion

Galatians 5:25 says, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." This is such a wonderful verse when you understand the Greek meanings of the words "live" and "keep in step." When it says, "Since we live by the Spirit," it isn't the same word for "live" that was used in verse 16, which meant, "to conduct one's life." This is the Greek word *zao*, and it means, "To enjoy real life; breathe; be among the living; active; blessed." So Paul is saying, "Since we have been given real life by the Spirit." The phrase, "keep in step" is the Greek word *stoicheo*, and it means, "To proceed in a row as the march of a soldier; to direct one's life."

What verse 25 is saying is since we have been made alive (given real life) by the Spirit of Christ who lives in us, let's fall in line and follow His direction as soldiers of God. Can you see the imagery of this verse? What would happen if as an army of believers we "fell in line" behind the Holy Spirit, surrendering our lives to His leadership. What would the lost world around us see? They would see a Church bearing the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. They would see an army of Christ followers fulfilling Christ's command in John 15:9 to remain in His love. They would see *Christ in us, the hope of glory!*

Application

This week in your time alone with God at the beginning of each day, seek to be conscious of choosing to "live by the Spirit" instead of by the flesh. Surrender control and ask God to fill you with His Spirit each day so you can bear His fruit for His glory!

