

HOW TO LIVE LIKE JESUS CHRIST (and why it's so hard) *Galatians 5:16-26*

How do you live like Jesus Christ? Will it work if we simply look at a situation, try to imagine what Jesus would do, and then just try our best to act like we think He would? For some reason it doesn't work out that way, does it? It's like someone once said: "It's easy to carve an elephant out of a bar of soap - just cut away everything that doesn't look like an elephant!" It sounds so simple, but there's more to it than that. The Christian life is the same way, and here in the last half of chapter 5, Paul explains why.

¹⁶ *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

¹⁷ *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.* ¹⁸ *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.*

¹⁹ *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;* ²⁰ *idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions* ²¹ *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.*

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³ *gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

²⁴ *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.* ²⁵ *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.* ²⁶ *Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

THE BATTLE WITHIN (5:16-18)

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being no struggle at all, and 10 being a constant battle, where would you put yourself right now in terms of the state of your inner spiritual life?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What light does Romans 7 :14-25 cast on the passage in Galatians?

THE FLESH

(5:19-21)

What is "*the sinful nature*" (often translated "the flesh")? Trace its occurrences in the New Testament and look up the meaning of the word.

Of these "works of the flesh", 3 are related to sex, 2 have to do with religion, 8 deal with relationships, and 2 are generally pagan practices. **Pick** 2 or 3 of these words and **study** them by tracing them in an English dictionary, a concordance, a Bible dictionary, or a New Testament word book (like Vine's or Larry Richards' Expository Dictionary.) If each member of your group takes a few, you can fill in the chart.

Word	Meaning
<i>sexual immorality</i>	
<i>impurity</i>	
<i>debauchery</i>	
<i>idolatry</i>	
<i>witchcraft</i>	
<i>hatred</i>	
<i>discord</i>	
<i>jealousy</i>	
<i>fits of rage</i>	
<i>selfish ambition</i>	
<i>dissensions</i>	
<i>factions</i>	
<i>envy</i>	
<i>drunkenness</i>	
<i>orgies</i>	

"It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive and loveless sex, a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage, frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness, trinket gods, magic-show religion, paranoid loneliness, cutthroat competition, all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants, a brutal temper, an impotence to love or be loved, noisy bickering, small-minded and lop-sided lifestyles, a vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival, uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions, ugly parodies of community. I could go on."

(paraphrase by Eugene Peterson)

Who are those who "live like this"? Does this verse mean that Christians can go to hell?

THE SPIRIT

(5:22-26)

What is the difference between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit? (Can you lose a fruit or a gift? Should Christians have all the fruit or all the gifts? How does your spiritual walk affect your fruit or gifts?)

Using the chart below, do some extra research on the fruit of the Spirit, as you did for the works of the flesh.

Word	Meaning
<i>love</i>	
<i>joy</i>	
<i>peace</i>	
<i>patience</i>	
<i>kindness</i>	
<i>goodness</i>	
<i>faithfulness</i>	
<i>gentleness</i>	
<i>self-control</i>	

"What happens when we live God's way? Things begin to appear in our lives much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard, things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of going with the grain of the universe, a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people; and we find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely. No one can prevent us from living this way."

(paraphrase by Eugene Peterson)

HOW DO I "KEEP IN STEP"?

Paul seems to outline three steps in this process of "keeping in step with the Spirit".

1. Crucify the flesh

What does this mean? When and how does it happen? (Crucifixion was a slow, lingering type of death where the person was visibly displayed. Why is that an appropriate image for the spiritual process of "just saying no"?)

What does this mean for you right now in your life?

2. Be led by the Spirit

What words come to your mind when you think of "being led"?

Is this something that is hard for you to do?

3. Walk / Keep in step with the Spirit

The Greek word translated "live" (NIV) in verse 16 is literally "walk". What image is conjured up when you add together the two concepts of being led and walking? (See Matthew 4:19,20)

Is it an active or passive process? (Which extreme do you tend towards - being too active or too passive in your spiritual life? What can you do in the next week to gain more of a balance?)