

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

STUDY ONE

Winning the Raging Battle within Us

Galatians 5:16–23

What a wonderful world this would be if the fruit of the Spirit was constantly on display. How we need these qualities in this lost, dying, and desperate world!

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THE longest battle in the history of humanity rages on with no signs of letting up. It's not a battle between opposing armies fought with tanks and missiles. Loud explosions don't shatter the night sky nor does the blood of combatants stain a battlefield. And yet, the war is relentless and real, and its victims are countless. This battle is humanity's internal war with sin.

Sin is rebellion against God, and it is expressed in humanity's prideful drive for self-rule. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit because they desired to "be like God" (Genesis 3:5). They wanted godlike authority to live on their own terms. Their original sin poisoned the spiritual bloodstream of humanity. As a result, we all are born with rebellion in our hearts and a taste for forbidden fruit on our lips.

Our defiant nature, which Paul called the *flesh*, propagates a deadly harvest of sins—"deeds of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19). Christians, however, have the indwelling Holy Spirit, who is our hero in our fight with sin.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll follow the Holy Spirit into battle with sin and discover His fruits—godly qualities that our dying world desperately needs. The fruits of the Spirit give us a taste of paradise. They show us how God designed humans to live, and they are *freely* available to anyone who opens their heart to the Holy Spirit, submits to His authority, and invites Him to take control.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take a few moments to quiet your spirit and invite the Lord to minister to you through His Word. You may wish to pray as Chuck prays before he studies the Word: “I often pray, ‘Lord, speak to me. Help me understand what this passage is saying. I am listening. I am sensitive to Your truth. Lead me into it.’”¹



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The contextual soil for the fruit of the Spirit is Galatians. This letter explains how God’s grace liberates us from two slave masters of the soul. First, *God’s grace liberates us from the law and enables us to love one another*. Because God accepts us by faith in Christ, we are no longer “under obligation to the law of Moses” (Galatians 5:18). Grace frees us to “obey the law of Christ” (6:2)—the law of love—and to “serve one another in love” (5:13).

Second, *God’s grace liberates us from sin and enables us to walk by the Spirit*. Yes, we are free from the law, but, as Paul warned, “don’t use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature” (5:13). Grace is not a license to sin. Instead, it’s a gateway to abundant living as we walk in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

Let’s take a closer look at our liberation from sin and see how the Spirit guides us into the life God intended.

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Observation: Letting the Holy Spirit Guide Us

Observation is the foundational phase in *Searching the Scriptures*.² Ask yourself, “What does the passage say?” Take time to notice the commands, statements of truth, contrasts and comparisons, and causes and effects. Accurate interpretation depends on careful observation.

The Flesh and the Spirit in Conflict—Galatians 5:16–18

A central figure in Galatians is the Holy Spirit. We received the “Holy Spirit through faith” when we trusted in Jesus as our savior (Galatians 3:14). When God adopted us as His children, He affirmed our new identity by sending “the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, ‘Abba, Father’” (4:6).

How are we to relate to the Spirit within us? What did Paul tell us to do in *Galatians 5:16*? If we obey this command, what will be the result?

The Greek word translated “sinful nature” is *sarx*, or “flesh,” and the Greek word for “craves” is *epithumia*, or “desires.” We’ll dig deeper into the meaning of the “desires of the flesh” in the interpretation section. For now, observe what Paul said about the flesh and the Spirit in *5:17–18*. What contrasts do you see? What is the nature of the conflict between the two?

How do you experience this conflict in your own soul?

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A person can be a Christian and still act like a lost person. The sin nature is present in us, and it will not change until we go to be with the Lord.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Deeds of the Flesh versus the Fruit of the Spirit—Galatians 5:19–23

In *Galatians 5:19–23*, Paul lists the sins people commit when they “follow the desires of [their] sinful nature” (Galatians 5:19). He also lists the Spirit-produced fruits exhibited by those who “follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of [their] lives” (5:25). Use the following chart to write down these two lists:

Deeds of the Flesh <i>Galatians 5:19–21</i>	Fruits of the Spirit <i>Galatians 5:22–23</i>

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Paul’s fifteen deeds of the flesh are just a sampling. There are “other sins like these” (Galatians 5:21). In this list, do you see similar kinds of sins grouped together? How might you categorize the sins in [5:19–21](#)? What other sins might these categories include?

The word, “fruit,” in 5:22 is singular, so we might think of fruit as a cluster of virtues on a single spiritual vine that connects to Christ. Do you see similar kinds of virtues grouped together in [5:22–23](#)? How might you categorize them?

Here’s a cluster of delicious virtues that are far superior to anything the flesh can produce. Don’t you long to have these qualities in your life? It can happen!
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Key Terms to Understand

Interpretation seeks to understand the text as Paul’s first-century readers would have understood it. We can use Bible-study tools to help define Greek words and contextual clues to decipher the meaning.

At the beginning of Galatians, Paul used the Greek word, *sarx*, to refer to people in general—“flesh and blood” (Galatians 1:16). But later in his letter, Paul used “flesh” to describe our corrupted human nature with its sinful “passions and desires” (5:24).

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Define “flesh” in *Galatians 5:16–17* by using your Bible-study tools or by looking up *sarx* in the Greek dictionary at billmounce.org. The online commentary *Constable’s Notes* at netbible.org can help. Write down your definition in the space below.

The Greek word for “desires,” *epithumia*, is particularly intense. How does the Greek dictionary at billmounce.org define this word?

We may have “good intentions” to do what’s right (*Galatians 5:17*), but willpower alone isn’t enough to overcome our fleshly desires. How did Paul describe our losing battle between our will and our flesh in *Romans 7:18–20*?

The role of our will is in our *choice* to turn to the Spirit in surrender and submission. We exchange our will for His will, our desires for His desires, and our self-rule for His control. Look up *Galatians 5:16* in several Bible versions and notice how “walk by the Spirit” (5:16 NASB) is translated. Define what it means to walk by the Spirit.

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Correlation: The Spirit-Led Life

Correlation hunts for similar principles in other Scriptures to deepen our understanding of a passage. How did Paul contrast the control of the flesh (sinful nature) versus control of the Spirit in *Romans 8:5–6*? What key words describe how we relate to the Spirit in this passage?

Read *Ephesians 4:21–24; 5:18*, noting the commands, “renew,” “put on,” and “be filled.” How do these commands add to your understanding of relating to the Spirit?

Combine these ideas with the key concepts in Galatians—“walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16 NASB), “let the Holy Spirit guide” (5:16), “directed by the Spirit” (5:18), “live by the Spirit” (5:25 NASB), and “follow the Spirit” (5:25 NASB). Summarize your understanding of the Spirit-led life:

The Spirit of God whispers to you, “If you will rely on Me today at every turn, at every moment, then I will live out My love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control through you. Trust Me.”
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Application: Inviting the Spirit to Produce His Fruit in You

Trees produce fruit when the condition of the soil is right. Similarly, the Holy Spirit produces His fruit in us when the condition of our *soul* is right. When our hearts are receptive to His guidance. When our minds are illuminated by His teaching from Scripture. When our wills are surrendered to His control. And when we act in obedience to His commands.

Reflecting on the principles from our passage, what first step can you take to deepen your walk by the Spirit?

Willpower alone won't overcome the flesh. We need Spirit-power to beat this enemy. Are you battling a sinful impulse that needs spiritual power to conquer? If so, use the following space to call upon the Holy Spirit to take on this fight for you.

Yielding control to the Holy Spirit is a daily, hour-by-hour, minute-by-minute, ongoing endeavor that takes focus. What can remind you to rely on the Spirit today? Perhaps repeating a Scripture verse. Listening to Scripture or praise music. Setting a reminder alarm to pause for prayer. What ideas do you have that will work for you?

The Holy Spirit produces His fruit in you when you walk closely with Him. You can't force His fruit to grow. You just need to take the next step with Him and watch His fruit appear.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I turn to You as my guide and source of spiritual life. Only Your Spirit can renew my soul and invigorate my heart. Put to death the desires of my flesh. They have been crucified with Christ. They no longer master me, for You are my Lord and my King. Thank You for putting Your Spirit in me. I depend on Him for every step I take today. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 128.
2. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2023, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

