

## Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 7-23-17

July 23 we will study Galatians 5:16-25. Discussion questions are:

1. What is the significance of the word “fruit” in 5:22?
2. Look at the 2 lists in 5:19-21 and 5:22-23. Which of the 2 lists best describes the kind of person you want to baby-sit your children? marry your child? sell you a piece of property? live next door to you?
  - a. If you wouldn’t want anyone in the first list to baby-sit your children, etc., why would you want to live that way yourself?
3. If the definition of body, soul and spirit presented in the sermon today is accurate, what is the primary function of your soul?
  - a. Would “losing your soul” be tantamount to “losing your ability to choose between right and wrong”?
4. In the list of acts of the sinful nature in 5:19-21, which ones are obviously ungodly and not very present in our fellowship? Which ones might be found in just about any church? How serious is it that those that could be found in any church are in the same list with those that are obviously ungodly?
5. How do you nail your passions and desires of your sinful nature to the cross? (5:17)
6. How do you follow the Spirit’s leading? (5:25)
  - a. What is the significance of the phrase, “in every part of our lives”? (5:25b)
7. Have you spent much time asking God to give you one of the fruits of the Spirit?
  - a. If it is true that God gave you those gifts the day you were baptized, what prayer do you need to be offering about those gifts? (Opportunities to use your gift!)
8. How many of you are opting to take the 30-day challenge? (Consider doing this with a prayer partner for 30 days and comparing notes daily.)

### Sermon: *What’s Your Plan For Fighting The War?*

On the island of Tanna in the South Pacific during WWII, the islanders witnessed the Americans and British come in and build airstrips. Then, when the airstrips were built, planes started to arrive, loaded with cargo. The islanders deduced that if they built airstrips, then planes would come to them, too, likewise bringing cargo. They accordingly hacked makeshift runways out of the jungle and built mock-up control towers out of grass and mud. Then they sat and waited for the cargo to arrive. But it didn’t work. No airplanes ever came.

In the world you and I live in people do similarly unproductive things in hopes of finding love, joy and peace. Rather than build runways in the jungle we sit in church buildings and try to look religious. “Surely”, we think, “if my life looks spiritual, then God’s blessing will follow.” What we are missing, like the Melanesian islanders, is the fact that cargo comes not because of runways and control towers but because of a relationship with the one who sends the cargo.

Love, joy and peace are not the result of adherence to a set of Christian standards; rather they grow out of a relationship with God born of faith in Jesus Christ.

Spiritually speaking, every life bears fruit. The kind of fruit depends upon where one's life is rooted. The choice is clear in Galatians 5:16-17, "...let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions."

We are made up of three parts: body, soul, and spirit. Your body frequently calls you to just do what comes natural, whatever makes you feel good. Your spirit is the part of you made in the image of God. When you give your life to Christ you are agreeing to allow your spirit to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. But you also have a soul. Your soul is that part of you that has emotions and free will. Your body pulls you one direction; your spirit pulls you the opposite direction. The health of your soul determines the direction you will go. Hear Galatians 5:16-17 again, "...let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions."

Look at the clear-cut choices given in Galatians 5:

#### **Acts of the sinful nature**

"...sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these." – Galatians 5:19-21

#### **Fruits of the spirit**

"...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." – Galatians 5:22-23

You have to choose which of those kinds of fruit you want to see produced in your life. Do you know what happens if you plant an apple tree near a red cedar tree? They infect each other. The apple tree gets brown rot and the cedar tree gets slimy orange cankers. Neither tree can remain infected year after year without the other. The apple has to be infected by the cedar and the cedar has to be infected by the apple. You can't have both. If you want apples don't plant red cedar and if you want red cedar don't plant apples.

The same is true of your spiritual life. Life lived in the Spirit doesn't cooperate with the desires of the sinful nature. Life lived giving in to your sinful nature doesn't cooperate with the desires of the spirit. They can't peacefully coexist. When a person puts on Christ in baptism, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in their life and you will never again be satisfied to live in sin. In the words of Galatians 5:17, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there."

Every year at Christmas time trees pop up all over the place. They have pretty lights and colorful decorations. They seem alive with sparkles and angles and glistening streamers. But truth of the matter is they aren't alive at all. They are artificial. As soon as the mood leaves us we pack them away not to be seen again for many months. Real trees on the other hand are rarely spectacular. They just grow a little every year and continually produce fruit. Which is more important? We don't even need to ask.

None of our good deeds produce love, joy and peace in our lives. None of our law keeping produces patience, kindness, and goodness in our lives. None of our determination and commitment produces faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in our lives. The Holy Spirit and only the Holy Spirit produces those qualities in us. Our task is merely to "keep in step with the Spirit." Listen to Paul's great summary statement from Galatians 5:25, "Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives."

Some of you, like me, have spent a lot of time asking God to give you what you already have. How many times have you asked God to give you peace, patience or self-control? If those are byproducts of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit then it makes no sense to ask God to give them to you because He did that the day you were baptized. Wouldn't it make more sense to ask God to give you opportunities to use you gift?

What happens to my arm if I strap it to my chest and leave it that way for a year? After a year my arm will have atrophied. With body parts the rule is, "Use it or lose it." That's why we exercise. Wouldn't the same thing be true of your spiritual life? God gives you the ability to love – use it or lose it. God gives you the ability to live life with joy – use it or lose it. God gives you peace that passes understanding – use it or lose it. God gives you the ability to be patient – use it or lose it. God gives you the ability to be kind – use it or lose it. God gives you the ability to be full of goodness – use it or lose it. God gives you the ability to be faithful – use it or lose it. God gives you the ability to be gentle – use it or lose it. God gives you the ability to practice self-control – use it or lose it.

I want to issue you a 30-day challenge today. This challenge is not for everyone. If you are not serious about you spiritual life just ignore the rest of this. It is only for those who long to see God's hand in their spiritual life. Here's the challenge. Look at the list of fruits of the spirit:

LOVE

JOY

PEACE

PATIENCE

KINDNESS

GOODNESS

FAITHFULNESS

GENTLENESS

SELF-CONTROL

Pick the one you wish to be more aware of having in your life – the one you feel in short supply of. For the next 30 days pray each morning this prayer: “God give me 3 opportunities before bedtime tonight to use my gift of .....”

It has been my experience that when I make that prayer a part of my daily communication with God and as I rotate those fruits of the spirit through that prayer, I have seen God’s hand in my spiritual life as never before. Things that once were temptations become answers to prayers. When God turns your temptations into reminders of the strength you have to resist those temptations, you will begin to grow spiritually in ways you never experienced before.

Folks we are in a war between our sinful nature and our spiritual nature. What is your plan for attacking the enemy?