# Study 2: Flesh vs Spirit (Gal 5:16-26)

## Talk about

Share your best/worst gardening (growing plants) story. What do you think leads to successful gardening?

## Introduction

Up to this point, Paul argues in this letter that we are saved (justified) by faith (our response) based on the promises of God (God’s gift), represented by the Gospel of Jesus. We are not saved by ‘works of the Law’ (our response) based on the Mosaic Law (God’s gift), represented by circumcision.

The natural question then is: “If being a Christian means being free from the legal and moral obligations set out in the mosaic law, how should we live? How do we be ‘holy’? Won’t this freedom from law mean that we become even more sinful?

This study of Gal 5 seeks to address these questions. By ‘walking by the Spirit’, a believer is able to grow in holiness and at the same time, avoid legalism.

## Scripture: Read Gal 5:16-26

**Discussion**

1. What words/phrases/ideas/concepts are repeated throughout the passage?
2. Which phrases are commands/instructions?
3. What do you think is the main contrast in this passage? (Locate the “But”).
4. What images or metaphors does Paul use?
5. What do you think is the main command of the whole passage? (v16, v25)
6. What outcome is:
   1. Avoided by obeying the main command (v16, v19-21)?
   2. Promised from obeying this main command? (v16, v22-23)
7. The fruit of the Spirit is a sample description of what ‘walking by the Spirit’ will result in. It is not a “to do” list to legalistically follow.

What comes to mind when you think about ‘fruit’ and ‘growing fruit’ and how does this encourage us in our ‘pursuit of holiness’ without us falling into legalism?

1. What encouragement do you get knowing that:
   1. The phrase “and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” is not a command, but a result (promise) of ‘walking in the Spirit’ (v16);
   2. The Spirit restrains the desires of the flesh (v17)
   3. The ‘flesh crucified’ is something that has happened in the past (v24); and
   4. Paul assumes the Galatians are already ‘living by the Spirit’ (ie. made alive by the Spirit, given life by the Spirit (cf. Gal 3:2-5), when he encourages them to ‘keep in step with the Spirit’.
2. What comes to mind when you think about ‘walking by/with someone’, and ‘keeping in step with someone’? How does this encourage us in our holiness?
3. What are some practical ways that you personally want to commit to in response to the encouragement to ‘walk in the Spirit’ and ‘keep in step with the Spirit’?

## Prayer:

Thank God for the Holy Spirit who:

* Restrains the desires of the flesh in our struggle against sin;
* Promises that ‘we will not gratify the desires of the flesh’ and will produce the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ in our lives – as we walk in the Spirit, and keep in step with Him.

Ask the Spirit to help you as an individual and as a group to live out your commitment to ‘walk in the Spirit’.

Ask the Spirit to help us as a congregation to listen to Him and keep in step with Him, moving at His pace and keeping to His path.