

The Holy Spirit | Week 2 - The Holy Spirit Can Free You

Points to keep in mind

1. Keep encouraging your small group to live out the BLESS practices. Use the beginning of your time together to ask the first question. You might even ask that question as a part of your prayer time together. The point is to keep it in front of the group. Be ready to share how you're trying to BLESS others.
2. There are a lot of big themes in Galatians. Try not to get bogged down in the details. The guide contains some discussion on those themes. The following commentary may be helpful to you as you navigate the text.
3. As so often in Paul, 'flesh' and 'spirit' oppose each other. This isn't a matter of the material world against the non-material. Many of the 'works of the flesh' could be practiced by a (wicked) disembodied spirit. It is, rather, a matter of where your true identity lies, where your deepest motivation comes from, and where the power that rules your life is really found. (Tom Wright, "Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians" London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 70.)
4. People start in the condition he calls 'flesh.' They are born into human families, with ethnic and territorial identities. They discover within themselves all kinds of desires, which, if allowed full rein, will produce the 'works' listed in verses 19–21. A glance back at this list will reveal that a society in which most people behaved in such a way is unlikely to be a happy or thriving place. What is more, when God finally establishes his kingdom, people like that will have no place in it; it would be very surprising if they did. That's not the sort of place, and state of affairs, that God wishes ultimately to create.

But then, through the announcement of the gospel of Jesus, God's spirit goes to work and people are renewed. The first sign of that renewal, and hence the true badge of their belonging, is their faith in Jesus as the risen Lord. But their membership in the Messiah's people involves them in a movement through death to new life. What is left behind in this death, this co-crucifixion with the Messiah, is precisely the life in which 'the flesh' determines who one is and how one behaves. (Tom Wright, "Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians" London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 72.)

5. One of Paul's concerns is that someone in the church at Galatia was telling people they needed to be circumcised to "really be a part of God's Kingdom." Not only did that set up an inevitable ethnic division between Jews and Gentiles (as circumcision was mostly a Jewish practice), but Paul also knew where that kind of thinking would lead. If circumcision, which was required under Jewish law became the norm for followers of Jesus, it would lead people down the road of law-keeping as the badge of membership in God's Kingdom community. Paul knew the law didn't have the power to give freedom; only a life filled with the Holy Spirit would be able to bring true freedom to the community.
6. The following quote by Tim Keller was used in the message to highlight how limits or constraints are a necessary part of freedom: "If you have musical aptitude, you may give yourself to practice, practice, practice the piano for years. This is a restriction, a limit on your freedom. There are many other things you won't be able to do with the time you invest in practicing. If you have the talent, however, the discipline and limitation will unleash your ability that would otherwise go untapped. What have you done? You've deliberately lost your freedom to engage in some things in order to release yourself to a richer kind of freedom to accomplish other things." *A Reason for God*, Tim Keller

Additional Question

1. Where do you see God at work in your life right now?
2. What next steps do you feel called to take in your faith journey?
3. Have you considered getting baptized? Visit communitychristian.org/baptism
4. Whom have you been able to B.L.E.S.S.?