

BRMC Small Group Study: Holy Spirit Session 6

Leader's Guide

Please note that the suggestions below are not model answers but to help guide your study. Feel free to adapt the questions for your group.

Scripture Passage:

Focus: Galatians 5:1, 16-23

Supplementary: 2 Corinthians 1:22

Open to the Spirit:

Focus chapter: 19

Supplementary chapters: 6 and 15

Context:

The fruit of the Spirit gives us evidence of living by the Spirit. The author emphasised that: "The fruit of the Spirit grow into maturity *because of the life of God – the Spirit – in us*. We are not responsible for the fruit; God is. We don't create the fruit; the Spirit does." (p 157) We all have our everyday battles to resist evil and do what is good. The Holy Spirit enables us to do acceptable things for the Lord and overcome the desires of the flesh. As we live in the Spirit, we grow in loving God and others. These are not our own effort, but God's work in us through the Holy Spirit. As McKnight writes, "[i]f we are going to become a people formed by love of God and others, we need more than our own strength." (p 123)

In the focus Scripture (Galatians 5:1, 16-23), the Apostle Paul is suggesting that humans are naturally inclined to do things according to the desires of the flesh (sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like), but because of the Spirit, we are able to do good things that are pleasing to the Lord (love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.) All these are produced not by our own work, but through the Spirit residing in us. We do this by walking in the Spirit.

Lesson Objectives:

- The Spirit produces fruit in us.
- The Spirit enables us to walk in the manner pleasing to the Lord and empowers us to resist the desires of the flesh.
- We can be transformed by the love of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Introductory

1. According to 2 Corinthians 1:22, what guarantees our relationship with the Lord and our salvation?
 - The Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

- This introduces the group to the importance of the Holy Spirit sealing us and giving us a spirit in our heart, and leads to the question of how we might know that the spirit that is in us.
2. What is the evidence of the Spirit's presence in us (with reference to the focus passage)?
- Galatians 5:22-23: The Spirit produces "fruit" – love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
 - In addition, McKnight also mentioned that, "Freedom, faith, and love become the fruit of the Spirit." (p 157)
 - The opposite view may also be explored, what is the evidence that the Spirit is not in us? Refer to Galatians 5:19-21.

Reflection

3. "The first 'fruit' of the Spirit is love. Love appears at the top of Paul's list of Spirit-prompted fruit in Galatians. While these verses can be read as a list of nine separate virtues, they also can be read as a description of one big virtue, captured in the word *love*, along with eight smaller ones ... Love is the most important virtue. A Spirit-formed and Spirit-prompted person is measured by loving God and loving others." (p 123-124)

Can you describe yourself as someone who is dependent-on and led-by the Holy Spirit (Spirit-formed and Spirit-prompted) when it comes to loving God and loving others?
How do you love people that you find difficult to love?

- This question provides an opportunity to reflect on whether it is possible to bear the fruit of the Spirit and the role of "love". Our church vision is to be Transformed by the Love of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Is this possible?)
 - "Spirit-prompted love" enables us to go beyond our capability to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbours, even our enemies, as ourselves.
 - McKnight suggests that: "If we are going to become a people formed by love of God and others, we need more than our own strength. When it comes to loving people, we need the power of the Spirit to transcend and transform us." (p 123)
 - "...we are designed by God to live by faith in Christ, and that faith generates in us a love of God, self, and others." (p 156-157)
 - This might help the group realise that how they relate to God and to other people requires them to be open to the Holy Spirit and to learn to engage with a Spirit-filled or Spirit-led life.
 - For some in the group, it may be more relevant to assess the depth of maturity of their Spirit-engaged life which is provided for in the next question...
4. Can you say that the fruit of the Spirit is borne in you and growing in maturity in you? Have you observed changes happening in you ever since you became more open to the Spirit? Can you describe how the Spirit helped you mature?

- This question provides an opportunity for the group to consider the evidence of “growth” and “maturity” in their walk. Self-assessment.
 - It is suggested that (p 157):“The fruit of the Spirit, if you look at them collectively and carefully, shape a person in the context of Christian and church fellowship”. To what extent do the people in the group have “fellowship” with others in our church? Do they serve in ministry? How do they participate in church life? If they serve in ministry outside BRMC, how does this contribute to the “fellowship” within BRMC?
 - Perhaps you could share how the last 5 sessions have impacted you: for example, if you were previously more closed to the Holy Spirit, are you now more open? Or if you were already open to the Spirit, how has the book or the sermons / study guide helped you to grow or mature?
 - This question can help open the group to consider that all their good works or expressions of love for God and others are produced by the Spirit in us and that we cannot boast about anything at all. OR, it may suggest to them that there is more that needs to be done in their inner life for growth and maturity.
 - You can then re-connect with the church vision to be transformed ... by the power of the Holy Spirit and ask the next reflection question ...
5. What does being “transformed by the love of Christ” actually look like to you (within our BRMC context or in your families or workplace)?
- For some the transformation might not be spectacular, for example, I used to tell little lies, but since becoming a Christian, I have felt more inclined to be very careful about my words. Or it could be in relation to one of the fruit, being slow to anger or having more patience etc.
 - You might steer the group to look more closely at how they might be able to see evidence of being transformed in their daily lives, and whether there is evidence of the fruit of the Spirit being borne in them. Be patient, allow every member an opportunity to share, and also to share negative situations where they may have felt that they fell short of bearing the fruit of the Spirit.
 - Encourage a non-judgmental environment because we all fall short. You may want to share your own experience of having fallen short.
 - What is the ideal situation? What is God’s view of how a transformed life should look like? Is it an “ultra-holy” person who is infinitely loving, joyful, patient, kind, etc Is this even possible? Yes, indeed with the Spirit all things are possible.
 - This leads to the application question, how each member of the group can move from where they are, to where God wants them to be ...

Application

6. In Galatians 5:19-23, the Apostle Paul listed down the works of the flesh and of the Spirit, although the lists are not exhaustive. Walking in the ways of the Spirit and rejecting the desires of the flesh is our everyday battle.

Jot down some practical ways or things that will help you become more resistant to the works of the flesh and be more open to the works of the Spirit?

- Allow time for the group to consider, discuss and write down (journal) their thoughts. Some examples might broadly be to engage with spiritual disciplines, daily prayer, reading scripture, hearing God, obeying God, etc.
- McKnight suggests the following (p 161-162):
 - o Walk by the Spirit – “to walk by the Spirit is to learn the way of the Spirit. The Spirit is the only inner resource who leads to faith, love, and freedom.”
 - o Follow the Spirit – (from Jimmy Dunn *The Epistle to the Galatians*) “God, as it were, recognising the power of human desire [the flesh], gives to those who open themselves to him a power (the Spirit) which is stronger than human desire. To surrender to that power is to be enabled to rise above and overcome the baser human instincts and appetites [again, the flesh.]”
 - o Live by the Spirit – “We get new-creation life by the Spirit; we are born anew by the Spirit; we experience a new presence of God by the Spirit; we have a new baptism in the Spirit; we have a New Ego and a new power at work in us by the Spirit.”
 - o Keep in step with the Spirit – “Someone is calling out the steps or beating the march cadence and drawing a line, and those who are open to the Spirit can learn to march in that line to keep in step with the beat of the Spirit.”
- It may be appropriate to engage the group to write out specific steps that are doable in the immediate future. These could be small steps, such as to wake up each morning and read a “verse of the day” even before brushing teeth.
- The next step is to hold each other accountable – if appropriate, break into smaller groups to share what each has written and to give each other permission to raise these application points at the next meeting.

Prayer

7. Write out a prayer for yourself based on what you have heard and learned from this session, and for your application steps.
 - It may be useful to break into smaller groups, or to keep within the small groups for the sharing above.
 - Allow some time for people to process what they have heard and learned from the Holy Spirit. Then encourage them to share with one another what their prayer is for this session, and for themselves for the week.
 - It is always useful to collate these prayers and to refer to them for thanksgiving and sharing next week.
- If it is appropriate, suggest to members to write down specific instances when they feel the Spirit at work in them and through them. This aims to help them become more aware of the Spirit’s presence in their lives.