



Sermon Discussion Questions

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Rev. Trevor Johnston (LOX); Rev. Brandon Weaver (LW); Pastor Mitch Nazario (ESP)

Sermon Series: One Book - Galatians

Week 5: How to Be Free the Right Way

1. ICE BREAKER: We began the message this week by thinking about rivalries. Rivalries exist in sports, literature, movies, food brands, and more! Think about and share with your group what comes to mind when you think of "rivalries" in your life.
2. Read our Scripture for this week, Galatians 5:13-26:

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those

who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.* ²⁶ *Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

Paul continues to unfold the idea of freedom in these verses. What do you hear him saying about freedom? Is there a particular verse, word or phrase that catches your attention as you read this Scripture passage today?

- Galatians 5:13b says, "But do not use your freedom to indulge your flesh." We often have a misunderstanding of freedom, and think of it negatively (freedom FROM rules) instead of positively (freedom FOR abundant life).

How would you define freedom in your own words? Talk about the difference between negative and positive freedom. How does the world define freedom? How does the Bible define freedom?

- Paul is addressing a contrast in two main ways of living - according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. Pastor John Mark Comer defines the flesh as, "our base, primal, animalistic drives for self-gratification, especially as pertains to sensuality and survival (distorted desires)" and the Spirit as the "empowering presence of Jesus' Spirit in us."

Reread Galatians 5:17 and discuss the relationship between flesh and Spirit. What does life feel like when the flesh and the Spirit are in conflict as Paul describes? Do you feel a difference in your own life when you are being led by the flesh vs. when you are being led by the Spirit? If so, what is that like?

- Sometimes in our life with God, we can get discouraged that it feels like we are still battling our flesh. However, we were reminded in the message that the battle doesn't mean we're failing, it means the Spirit is fighting for us. The struggle is a sign of life!

What are some practical things that you do in your own faith when you feel like you are battling the flesh? How can we encourage others in the moments that they are struggling?

- The vice list in Galatians 5:19-21 can be separated into four main categories: sexual sin, spiritual darkness, separation of community, and self-indulgent loss of control. These are the "fruits" of the flesh.

With your group, define each of the categories and give examples both from Paul's writing to the churches in Galatia, and that you see in our world. Do any of those that are included in the list surprise you? Talk about the "separation of community," sins that are often overlooked, and why it is so deadly.

7. Paul does not give this list in order to condemn, or to say that he is superior, morally righteous or high above others. In fact, in 1 Timothy 1:15, Paul wrote, *“Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.”*

At COH, we remind ourselves that being a sinner is actually a prerequisite for following Jesus. Discuss this idea and its importance. What happens if we forget that truth? How do we balance knowing that we are sinners, with knowing that we are COGPOWs (Children of God, People of Worth)?

8. Reread Galatians 5:22-23. These qualities are the fruits of the Spirit - the personality of Jesus! This is fruit that we do not have to try harder to embody, but that grows from the inside out, for the sake of others.

When you think across the seasons of your life, do you feel that you can see this fruit beginning to grow? If so, what does that look like? How do we make room for the Holy Spirit to do this work in us, rather than striving to create it ourselves?

9. PRACTICE: Have someone in your group put on music. (We suggest “Soaking in His Presence” if you need a recommendation!)

Reflect on Paul’s invitation for us in these verses:

- “Walk by the Spirit” (Gal 5:16)
- “Keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal 5:25)

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you areas of your life where you need to start walking by the Spirit, or where you are “out of step.” Confess, repent, and seek forgiveness for these sins.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and develop the fruits of the Spirit in those places instead!