

Focusing on the Fruits of the Spirit at Christmas Time

Galatians 5:16-26 (New International Version) - Life by the Spirit

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

19The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21and 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.

22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Galatians 5:16-26 (The Message)

16-18My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness. For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness. These two ways of life are antithetical, so that you cannot live at times one way and at times another way according to how you feel on any given day. Why don't you choose to be led by the Spirit and so escape the erratic compulsions of a law-dominated existence?

19-21It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on.

This isn't the first time I have warned you, you know. If you use your freedom this way, you will not inherit God's kingdom.

22-23But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.

23-24Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way. Among those who belong to Christ, everything connected with getting our own way and mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities is killed off for good—crucified.

25-26Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives. That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original.

LETTER TO PARENTS: 13 December 2009

FROM: Your 5th Grade Sunday School Teaching and Shepherd Team, 1st Presbyterian Church, Edmond

In the midst of the busy Christmas season, we are writing to share several updates with you and encourage your family to **MAKE TIME** during the holidays to focus together on the fruits which God promises to bring forth in us when we allow his Holy Spirit to enter into our lives.

1. CLASSROOM BLOG

The past several weeks we have used our classroom blog to share Bible verses, lesson information, and recorded audio podcasts from our Sunday School Class. We will continue to use this site to share with you and others about what we are learning and thinking about in class this year. We encourage you to visit weekly to see what we are doing, and especially to listen together to any audio or video we have created together in class! Talking about what we are studying and learning is so important! If we cannot “retell” the stories we have discussed and the lessons we have been studying, then learning has probably not taken place in Sunday School. **As a parent, please take your responsibility seriously to talk each week with your child about the themes and lessons we are discussing in Sunday School**, and together read those Bible verses, discuss them, and “retell” the messages that God’s Holy Spirit is sharing with you. We will continue to share our lessons and learning online with you and your family to better facilitate / support these weekly conversations. Our classroom blog address remains:

<http://blastcast.wordpress.com>

Please note you can **SUBSCRIBE BY EMAIL** to updates from our blog, by entering your email address on our blog in the upper left corner. This is a great way to get reminders by email when we’ve posted new updates.

2. iSHARE: Starting January 2010

Starting in January 2010, we will launch a new element of our weekly Sunday School classes called “iSHARE.” This is an opportunity for parents to share stories about our own faith, beliefs, and walk with God with our children and others. We encourage you to sign up to come to our Sunday school class this spring (January – May 2010) and share some short stories about your own faith.

Please visit the following website (which will forward you to an online, editable Google Spreadsheet) and sign up for iSHARE!

(link removed from online newsletter – contact Wes for the link)

We would like to record our parents’ iSHARE stories with audio (**NO VIDEO**, however) so we can share them on our classroom blog as podcasts. This will allow others to hear who cannot attend our Sunday School class or for students and families who want to listen again to these stories together.

When you sign up for iSHARE using the above link, you can indicate if you give permission for us to record and share your iSHARE stories online. Please prayerfully consider this decision. This is a powerful and important way for us to share our own faith with our children, our church family, and with others!

3. BLAST Sunday School Online Learning Community

To further encourage our students to think about the Bible verses and themes from our Sunday School class during the week, we have created a safe and secure online learning community just for our class. This is a space where students as well as parents can view videos and other media we have seen in class, engage in discussions about our lessons, visit links and share links related to our studies, etc.

Think of this learning community as a PRIVATE FACEBOOK SITE just for our students and families. A password is required to join our learning community, as well as an email address. If your child does not have an email address, you can use yours as a parent to sign up. The web address of our Sunday School Learning Community is:

<http://grapple.speedofcreativity.org>

The password to create an account on our learning community and participate is:

Parents are welcome to create accounts on this website as well as our students. Note, however, a separate email address is required for each account which is created.

For your child to participate in our online learning community, you will need to complete and return the following iFORM, giving your permission for their participation. The iFORM also asks for your permission share your child's individual work on our blog, which is on the public Internet.

As indicated on the iForm, at most your child's first name will be shared with his/her work, photos or videos online.

IN CLOSING:

If you have any questions about anything related to our Sunday School Class or this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me or our Shepherds. It is a privilege to have the opportunity to teach your children each week, and we look forward to continuing to partner with you as parents as week seek together to raise children who love God and want to walk in his ways.

Sincerely,

Wesley Fryer
(cell/home phone numbers removed from online newsletter version)
twitter / skype: wfryer

The FPCE 5th Grade iFORM

We use the Internet as an important tool to share information with our parents and community and to encourage conversations during the week about our Bible verses / themes we study in class. In addition to routine information dissemination on our classroom blog, we also wish to post student's work and ideas online. We also encourage our students and parents to participate in our private, secure online learning community. Your permission is required for us to use your child's individual work, picture, or first name in this communication medium, and for your child to participate in our online learning community. *Please respond to each of the four items below*, sign, and return the form to your child's teacher.

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian's Full E-mail Address: _____ (Your email address will never be distributed to anyone) yourname@provider.com

Item One: Please choose one of these statements for item 1

Yes, I give permission for my child to participate in our Sunday School's private, online learning community. I understand this website is password protected and moderated by our class' teachers and shepherds.

Signature: _____

No, I do not give permission for my child to participate in our class online learning community.

Signature: _____

Item Two: Please choose one of these statements for item 2

Yes, I give permission for my child's work samples or projects to be posted on the Internet. I understand that at most only my child's first name will be used to identify him or her.

Signature: _____

No, I do not give permission for my child's work samples or projects to be posted on the Internet.

Signature: _____

Item Three: Please choose one of these statements for item 3

Yes, I give permission for my child's picture to be posted on the Internet. I understand that at most only my child's first name will be used as to identify him or her.

Signature: _____

No, I do not give permission for my child's picture to be posted on the Internet.

Signature: _____

Item Four: Please choose one of these statements for item 4

Yes, I give permission for my child to be included in video footage that shares information and ideas related to our Sunday school class and activities. I understand that this footage may be used in a variety of formats including Internet distribution and that at most only my child's first name will be used to identify him or her.

Signature: _____

No, I do not give permission for my child to be included in any video footage.

Signature: _____