

Open

Life Group Leaders Guide

Objective

This guide contains the information and questions you will need to lead a life group study during our current sermon series. Our aim is to spark Spirit-led, Bible-centered conversations that anyone can participate in regardless of how biblically literate they may or may not be. **The win** that we want you to experience is when your group members **connect** more closely with each other and with God so that they are encouraged to move forward in living out their faith.

Directions

The *Purpose* and *Move* sections are for the leader to read to the group to provide clarity. **Do not feel pressured to cover all the questions.** Decide which ones may work best for your group. You will see brief notes interspersed between groups of questions to help give the group context for their answers. The *Notes and Commentary* section (when included) is optional reading for the leader to get background information and better understanding of the passages before leading the discussion.

Series Overview

The Holy Spirit is present in the life of every Christ-follower. He wants to transform us into persons who reflect the love, grace, and justice of Jesus. He wants to empower us to restore God's dream for this world. The question is: Are we open to the Holy Spirit?

To be "open" means both that we are receptive to the transforming presence of God and willing to be empowered by God. This three-week series challenges us to be open to all God wants to do in us and through us.

Open Series Schedule

Week	Sermon Date	Topic
1	5/17	Open to the God in Us
2	5/24	Open to the God Who Transforms
3	5/31	Open to the God Who Empowers

The Point Church Life Group Curriculum

Open to the God Who Transforms

The Big Idea

When we are open to the Holy Spirit, we will be transformed to become more and more like Jesus.

Flow of Study

Icebreaker: Describe one of the biggest changes you've seen in your life or in the life of someone close to you.

Move #1: Let's begin by reflecting on this week's sermon.

1. What stood out to you most from this sermon on being transformed by the Holy Spirit?
2. What is something about yourself that you have tried unsuccessfully to change?

Move #2: Next, let's discuss how the Holy Spirit can transform us if we are open to him.

Read Galatians 5:13-26 (NIV)

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.

3. How does the Holy Spirit set us free (verse 13)?
4. How is walking by the Spirit (verse 16) different from behavior modification?
5. What our sinful flesh desires is often contrary to what the Holy Spirit desires for us (verses 16-17). How have you experienced a feeling of distance from God when you've sinned?
6. When you become aware of your sin, why is it better to turn back to God immediately than to wait?
7. Why do you think the qualities stated in verse 22 are called "fruit?" How are they different from "acts" (verse 19)?

8. Do you think that the Holy Spirit produces all of this fruit in every Christ follower, or just some of them in each of us? Why?
9. Which fruit of the Spirit have you seen most in your own life? Least?
10. What does it mean that those belonging to Christ have “crucified the flesh” (verse 24)? How do we live this out?
11. While the Holy Spirit provides the power for transformation, what part do we have in accessing it?
12. Using a sailboat analogy for our lives, John Ortberg described how that, if the Holy Spirit is the wind that will propel our “boat” forward, spiritual disciplines are the sails we hoist that catch the wind. What spiritual disciplines have been most formative for you? Which new ones might you want to add?

Next Steps:

1. Walk with the Spirit by beginning each day in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to transform you, and make the choice to surrender your will to His each day. (See the prayer below.)
2. Receive the Spirit. Talk to your life group leader or one of our pastors about how you can commit your life to Jesus and receive his Holy Spirit.

Prayer: End your study with a time of praying with and for each other. Take requests, but begin by praying this prayer together again:

Holy Spirit, I am OPEN to you. Thank you for sealing me as a child of God and giving me access to him. Make me ever-aware of your presence dwelling in me. Speak to me, transform me, empower me to become more like Jesus. I OPEN myself up to you. Amen.

Notes and Commentary

The following are pieces of commentary, facts, and links based on the passages of this study in order. Use them to help supplement your group time or for your personal preparation.

On Galatians 5

Once again, to live “in the flesh” is fundamentally living outside the realm of the Spirit of God. “Flesh” is not effort necessarily (though that could be involved); rather, “flesh” is unspiritual life. Thus, “flesh” becomes closely attached to living “under the law” because, as Paul explains throughout his letter (see at 3:19–25), allowing one’s life to be governed by the law is choosing not to live under the governance of the Spirit. Flesh and law belong to an era that is now past; the new era is characterized by the Spirit and Christ. Furthermore, moderns need to understand that when Paul uses “flesh,” he is not thinking primarily in terms of “body” and the inferiority of the body in comparison to the spiritual aspect of human nature. This is a Platonic notion, not a biblical one. What Paul has in mind is the “total person living outside of God’s will and apart from God’s guiding influence through the Spirit.”

After making his point that freedom is not an excuse for indulging the flesh, Paul clarifies what he means by a life of freedom. Such a life, he says, is living in the Spirit. But this life is a war, a war between the Spirit and the flesh. But this war is not some “personal psychological struggle” or the “struggle within a person’s soul.”

Rather, as E. P. Sanders has said, “The war ... has to do with which power one—body and soul—belongs to.” The powers are “flesh” and “Spirit.”

In general we see something fundamentally important here as to how Paul depicts the Christian life. It is life in the Spirit, the life of a person who is surrendered to letting the Spirit have complete control. But we see here also that one does not gain this life by discipline or by mustering up the energy. One does not huddle with oneself in the morning, gather together his or her forces, and charge onto the field of life full of self-determined direction. Rather, the Christian life is a life of consistent surrender to the Spirit.

Paul describes “flesh” under the term works, while he sees the Spirit’s work as “fruit.” The former is plural while the latter is singular. Is there anything significant in the change of terms or the change of number? Above all, it must be observed that works has been a term of negative associations in Galatians and that Paul probably delighted in associating the “works” of the flesh with the “works of the law” (2:16; 3:2, 5, 10). The change of terms to “fruit” evokes a different image: from one of human responsibility to one of divine enablement. The image of fruit has a certain sense of passivity to it; it is the Spirit of God who produces such things, and they grow in the life of the Christian.

However, while this may be one reason for the change of terms, it is also clear that Paul sees evil as having fruit (6:8) and thinks that the Christian is responsible to let the Spirit be operative in his or her life. Note that Paul shoulders the responsibility of the Spirit’s fruit onto the Christian: “have crucified their flesh” (v. 24), “let us keep in step” (v. 25), and “let us not become conceited” (v. 26)—not to mention verses 13, 16, and 18. (Scot McKnight, *NIV Application Commentary: Galatians*)