

Ordinary Time, Proper 8

If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.—Galatians 5:25 NRSV

Explore

Be Good to Yourself

paper, markers,
pens, stapler, Bible

Galatians 5:14

Before class, make blank books for each student by folding sheets of paper lengthwise and cutting along the fold. Collate at least three strips, fold in the middle, and staple near the fold. When students arrive, give them a book and markers. Ask them to put their name on the cover of the book and decorate it. When everyone arrives, have them write at least three positive statements about themselves on the first page. On the back of the page, have them write three good things they enjoy doing for themselves, such as playing a game of basketball, going shopping, or watching a favorite TV show.

Be Good to Your Neighbors in the Same Ways

Using the same books, have students pass them to the person on their right. That person is to write three positive statements about the owner of the book. After several minutes pass the book to the next person, write three positive statements, and continue on until the book returns to the owner. Allow time for each student to read their book. Then ask them how this activity connects to the statement found in Galatians 5:14, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Extract

Bible

Galatians 5:1,
13–25

Freedom in the Spirit

In this part of Paul’s letter to the Galatians, he counseled them to remain strong and responsible with the freedom the Spirit gave. It is much harder than you think to have to make your own decisions and be responsible for them, more so than to have someone tell you what to do all the time. That’s what Paul was saying about the difference between being a slave and being free. Our freedom in Christ calls us to live our faith in love and compassion, to look for Christ in the eyes and hearts of others, and to introduce Christ to those who do not yet know him. Read what Paul had to say in Galatians 5:1, 13–25.

Freedom requires self-discipline. That’s what Paul was referring to when he compared the “works of the flesh” to the “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:19, 22 NRSV). It is a gift that requires our constant attention. But we aren’t totally on our own because God provides the Spirit to guide us when we are open to its direction. “If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25 NRSV). Ask for several interpretations of this statement. These interpretations may cause us to ask if the lifestyle we choose and the choices we make are in harmony with Christ’s message. Think about it.

Experience

Bible, flip chart,
markers

Luke 9:51–62

What’s Holding You Back?

“No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62 NRSV). Read or tell the substance of the story found in Luke 9:51–62 to provide background for this activity. Substitute phrases for “puts a hand to the plow.” See how many different careers or life situations can be used. For example, computer technicians would put their fingers to the keyboard. Write all the statements on a flip chart. Ask: “What things hold you back from living by the Spirit?” Add to the statements on the flip chart. Are they thoughts, status, perceptions, peer pressure, or expectations? Remember, Christ frees us to move forward. Read Galatians 5:1 again. Ask, “How will you live by the Spirit in the coming week?”

When the Holy Spirit Comes

When the Inner Spirit comes to a person, it brings many gifts from God. There are many other gifts. Look up the following scriptures and write on the flip chart the gifts the Spirit brings.

Matthew 22:36	love	Philippians 4:4	joy
1 Peter 3:11	peace	1 Thessalonians 5:14	patience
Colossians 3:12	kindness	Galatians 6:10	goodness
Revelation 2:10	faith	Titus 3:2	meekness
James 1:5	wisdom	Colossians 1:9	knowledge

Bible, scissors, construction paper, markers, ribbon, tape

Have the class cut several 6-by-8-inch rectangles from different colored construction paper. Print names of the gifts in large letters and the scripture reference on the construction paper. Add ribbons to give a gift-like appearance.

Tree Identification

You can't tell a book by its cover, but you can tell a tree by its fruit. From brown paper bags, make the trunks and branches of two trees. Give the students sticky-notes. Ask students to reflect on their activities of the past week, and write one activity per sticky-note. They may do as many as they want, then stick them to the first tree. Read the notes on the tree, and compare them to the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22–25—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Any notes found to support the information given in the scripture can be moved to the second tree. Analyze the two trees. How well does the class live by the Spirit?

brown paper bags, scissors, sticky-notes in several colors, pens, tape, Bible

Galatians 5:22–25

Think about the collective abilities represented by the class on the second tree. What are they? How can they be used in your community? Discuss. Use a different color sticky-note pad to add new ways the class can live by the Spirit. Perhaps one of the original or new ideas can develop into a community service project.

Expand

Living by the Spirit

Put a wall map of the world on the table or floor with the top of the map heading north. Place a compass at the center of the map with the arrow pointing north. Give each student a magnet. Let the magnet represent one thing that gets in the way of living by the Spirit. One at a time, have students place their magnets on the map, and note the reaction of the compass arrow as each one is added. When things get in the way, we're thrown off course. When we seek true north, God's way, our lives again align with God. Ask students to move their magnets to the edge of the map. What happens when we remove the distractions from our lives and live by the Spirit? Discuss. Sing the campfire song "Spirit of the Living God." Close by reading, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25 NRSV).

wall map, compass, small magnet for each student, Bible

Galatians 5:25