

LEADER GUIDE — FORMED BY THE GOSPEL

SESSION 1:4 | WALK IN THE SPIRIT

Overview for Leaders

This session focuses what it means to *walk in the Spirit* and bear fruit like Jesus. Paul contrasts two fundamentally different ways of life – walking by the flesh versus walking by the Spirit – and shows that spiritual fruit is not manufactured through effort or mindset but produced by the Holy Spirit through union with Christ. This session helps us move away from performance-based Christianity and toward Spirit-dependent discipleship, where the life of Jesus is gradually formed in us.

Big Idea

Walking in the Spirit means bearing fruit like Jesus. We do not manifest spiritual life; we walk in the Spirit, and fruit grows.

Your Role as Leader

Warm the room and build trust. Guide the group through Scripture. Ask questions that stir reflection rather than debate. Keep discussion focused but not forced. Create space for conviction without shame and encouragement without pressure. You are facilitating formation, not fixing people.

Session Flow – *Adjust as Needed*

- Icebreaker
- Scripture Engagement (reading + context)
- Discussion (10 questions) — 40–45 min
- Application Challenge — 5 min
- Prayer & Reflection — 10 min
- Announcements — 2 min

Key Scriptures

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|---------------------|----------------------|
| • Galatians 5:16–26 | • Romans 6:6–11 |
| • Romans 8:1–11 | • Ezekiel 36:26–27 |
| • John 15:1–10 | • Matthew 7:16–20 |
| | • Colossians 2:20–23 |

LEADER NOTES, GROUP QUESTIONS, & COMMENTARY

(Use these notes to frame discussion and connect themes)

Icebreaker (Choose One)

Purpose – Build relational warmth and get everyone speaking early. Keep it moving. Affirm honesty. Model curiosity, not judgment.

Suggested options:

- Where do you feel pressure to improve or perform in life?
- When you hear the word “fruit,” what comes to mind spiritually?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Walking Defined – Read: Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:4

Question: *What does Paul mean by “walk by the Spirit”? How is walking different from isolated spiritual moments?*

Leader Insight: Walking implies direction, pace, and consistency. Paul is describing a whole-life orientation, not occasional spiritual effort.

Cue: If discussion drifts toward techniques, gently re-center on relationship and dependence.

2. Flesh vs. Spirit – Read: Galatians 5:17–18; Romans 8:5–6

Question: *How does Paul describe the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit? Why is there no neutral ground?*

Leader Insight: The flesh and the Spirit are opposing sources of life. Paul frames this as a leadership issue, not a willpower issue.

Cue: Normalize struggle without excusing direction.

3. Works vs. Fruit – Read: Galatians 5:19–21; Matthew 7:17

Question: *Why does Paul call these the works of the flesh, but the fruit of the Spirit?*

Leader Insight: Works are produced by effort; fruit grows from life. Paul is intentionally contrasting human output with Spirit-produced life.

Cue: Avoid listing sins individually; keep focus on source.

4. Direction, Not Perfection – Read: Galatians 5:21; Philippians 1:6

Question: *Why is Paul concerned with the ongoing direction of someone's life rather than isolated failures?*

Leader Insight: Paul is warning against a settled pattern of flesh-led living, not moments of repentance and struggle.

Cue: Guard against shame-based responses.

5. Unified Fruit of the Spirit – Read: Galatians 5:22–23

Question: *Why does Paul say the fruit of the Spirit (singular) instead of fruits? What does this tell us about spiritual formation?*

Leader Insight: The Spirit produces a unified Christlike life, not fragmented virtues. Fruit reveals who is leading.

Cue: Help participants resist cherry-picking traits.

6. Source Revealed – Read: John 15:4–10; Galatians 5:22

Question: *How does Jesus' teaching about abiding help us understand fruit-bearing?*

Leader Insight: Fruit grows from connection, not control. Abiding parallels walking in the Spirit. Jesus makes clear that we show we are abiding or walking in the Spirit because we obey his commands.

Cue: Emphasize dependence over discipline.

7. Crucified with Christ – Read: Galatians 5:24; Romans 6:6–7

Question: *What does it mean that the flesh has been crucified with Christ?*

Leader Insight: Union with Christ means the old self has lost authority, even though temptation remains.

Cue: Reinforce identity before behavior.

8. Living by vs. Keeping in Step – Read: Galatians 5:25

Question: *What's the difference between living by the Spirit and keeping in step with the Spirit?*

Leader Insight: The Spirit is both the source of life and the guide for daily living.

Cue: Invite practical examples.

9. Real vs. Fake Fruit – Read: Matthew 7:16–20

Question: *How did the real vs. fake fruit illustration clarify the difference between flesh and Spirit?*

Leader Insight: External appearance can be deceiving; life reveals itself over time.

Cue: Avoid turning this into judgment of others.

10. Gospel Power – Read: Romans 8:11; Ezekiel 36:26–27

Question: Why is the gospel essential to walking in the Spirit?

Leader Insight: The Spirit's work flows from new birth and union with Christ, not moral resolve.

Cue: Bring discussion back to grace.

APPLICATION (Leader Version)

Application Focus:

Read Colossians 3:12–17 together. Paul uses deliberate put on language to describe how life in the Spirit is lived out daily. This passage shows us that walking in the Spirit is not passive — it is an intentional, Spirit-empowered participation in the new life we already have in Christ. Encourage each person to choose one posture or practice from this passage to intentionally “put on” this week.

Leader Tip: Ask: “Which of these feels hardest to put on right now — and why?” Then allow silence. This often leads to deeper reflection.

Examples:

- Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience
- Bearing with one another and forgiving as the Lord has forgiven you
- Letting the peace of Christ rule your heart
- Letting the word of Christ dwell in you richly
- Doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus

We don’t put these on to earn God’s favor — we put them on because we already belong to Him.

Group Prayer Time at End:

Pray over themes:

- Putting off the old self and putting on the new
- Daily dependence on the Spirit
- Christlike character growing over time
- Gratitude and worship flowing from a changed life

Close with: “Holy Spirit, help us put on the life of Christ each day as we walk in step with You.”

Leader Follow-Up Afterwards

- Check in mid-week to encourage Spirit-dependent practices
- Affirm visible growth, even if small
- Remind participants that fruit grows over time, not overnight