

# CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week #1 - Introduction



## GETTING STARTED

Spend some time checking in with each other. Any highs and lows since the last time you met?

Share about a hobby or passion you had growing up (like Pastor Angie's husband's love of bikes, or her son's love of the mountain biking team). What did it teach you about community or perseverance?

## THIS WEEK'S THEME

How have you experienced or observed the “spiritual but not religious” trend?

What are some reasons people (including yourself) might feel hurt or disillusioned by the church?

When have you seen individualism affect how people approach faith and community?

Read Ephesians 4:11-13

- What stands out to you in Paul's vision for the church?
- How does this passage challenge our culture's emphasis on individualism?

What could it mean to treat faith like a “team sport” instead of an “individual race”?

Galatians 5:22-23

- Which of the fruits of the Spirit do you find easiest to show? Which are the hardest?
- How are these traits “mature” expressions of faith?
- In what ways does community help you develop these fruits?

Share a time when community helped you grow in your faith.

Angie referenced the Greek word, “teleios” – meaning that something has fulfilled its purpose. What does spiritual maturity look like to you?

How do you think God uses relationships with others to help us grow? What areas of your life could use more maturity right now?

## DIGGING DEEPER

From The Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-galatians/#galatians-5-6-living-by-the-spirit-and-new-creation>

### Galatians 5-6: Living by the Spirit and New Creation

“Paul’s opponents might argue that the laws of the Torah are a proven guide to living according to God’s will. How will non-Jewish Christians learn without them? Paul responds in chapters 5-6 by describing how Jesus’ transforming presence through the Spirit is the key. Paul says that the laws of the Torah are good and wise. And they can be summarized, as Jesus did, in the command to love your neighbor as yourself (Lev. 19:18). However, the laws, as good as they are, didn’t give Israel the power to obey them. But the good news is that Jesus fulfilled the laws on our behalf. He now lives in us through the Spirit, making his people into new humans who fulfill the law by loving others.

Paul goes on to contrast the old and new humanity. The habits of the old humanity are obvious—behaviors that dehumanize people and destroy relationships and communities through selfishness, envy, divisiveness, sexual immorality, idolatry, and murder. While the laws of the Torah prohibited these behaviors, Jesus is the one who put them to death on the cross. When a person trusts in Jesus, living in dependence on the power of his Spirit, his life becomes theirs. This produces what Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit. It’s Jesus’ own way of life, which he wants to reproduce in his family so that they become people of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The production of this fruit isn’t automatic, Paul says. It requires cultivation just like real fruit. In his words, “If we live by the Spirit, we have to keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). Doing so requires intentionality. We have to learn how to prune off our old habits and cultivate new ones. As we do so, we will be carried along by the Spirit as Jesus reshapes our minds and hearts, making us into people who love God and others. In this way, Jesus’ people fulfill what Paul calls the Torah of the Messiah (Gal. 6:2).”

## PRAY

Ask how you can pray for each other this week. What prayer requests do you have?

Gracious God, Thank you for the gifts of the spirit. Teach us to live in a way the world needs. Amen.

## TAKING IT HOME

Choose one fruit of the Spirit and practice it intentionally in your interactions this week. Notice how it affected you and others in your life.