

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

WINNING THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE

Overcoming the sinful nature. A study on understanding, identifying, and crucifying the enemy within through the power and leading of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:16-24 · Spirit vs. Sinful Nature

OVERVIEW

THREE ENEMIES, ONE FOUNDATION

This guide is designed to help your small group explore the sermon's central theme: understanding, identifying, and crucifying the sinful nature through the power and leading of the Holy Spirit. The pastor outlined three main spiritual enemies every believer faces – the sinful nature, the world, and Satan and his demonic forces – and focused this message on the first and most foundational enemy: the sinful nature.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

UNDERSTAND THE ENEMY

The sinful nature is the part of us that desires to live independent of God, seeks to be glorified above God, and pursues its own way in opposition to God's way. It is not our physical body – it is a spiritual force operating within us.

2

IDENTIFY THE ENEMY

The sinful nature makes itself known through specific behaviors and patterns described in Galatians 5:19-21 – from sexual immorality and idolatry to jealousy, division, and drunkenness. These characteristics are observable and should serve as warning signs in our lives.

3

CRUCIFY THE ENEMY

We are not called to fight the sinful nature in our own strength. Through submission to the Holy Spirit, we nail the sinful nature to the cross of Christ, where it has already been defeated. The Holy Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in us as we yield to His leading.

DISCIPLESHIP

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these to open up honest conversation in your group, one-on-one, or in your own journaling this week.

01

The pastor describes the sinful nature as 'that part of us that desires to live independent of God' – in what specific areas of your life do you find yourself most tempted to rely on your own strength rather than submitting to the Holy Spirit's guidance?

02

Paul's letter to the Galatians presents the Holy Spirit and the sinful nature as two opposing forces in constant conflict – how does understanding this as the Holy Spirit's battle rather than your own personal battle change the way you approach temptation and spiritual struggle?

- 03** The pastor defines evil not just as obvious wrongdoing but as anything done outside of a relationship with God, anything that disrupts that relationship, or anything that prevents one from entering it – how does this broader definition challenge or expand your understanding of sin in your daily life?
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- 04** The sermon draws a distinction between fighting spiritual battles through church leadership and fighting them directly with God in prayer – in what ways might believers unintentionally place more trust in people or institutions than in their own personal communion with God?
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- 05** The pastor uses the analogy of a policeman on the corner versus laws written in a book to illustrate the difference between the active Holy Spirit and mere knowledge of scripture – how does this challenge you to move beyond knowing God's word to actually living in dependence on the Spirit?
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- 06** Galatians 5 lists both the works of the sinful nature and the fruit of the Spirit as identifiable characteristics – which of the Spirit's fruits do you find most difficult to consistently demonstrate, and what might that reveal about areas where the sinful nature still holds influence?
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SMALL GROUP GUIDE - DEVOTIONAL

Deeper reflection questions for small group or personal devotional time this week.

- 01 The pastor warns that 'a little leaven leavens the whole loaf,' suggesting that tolerating even small expressions of the sinful nature can lead to greater spiritual compromise - where in your life might you be allowing small concessions to sin that could eventually undermine your walk with God?

- 02 The sermon emphasizes that the sinful nature disguises itself in things we enjoy or find comfortable rather than presenting itself as openly evil - how can believers develop greater discernment to recognize when something appealing is actually drawing them away from God?

- 03 The pastor states that 'until you die to self, you cannot truly live to God' - what does dying to self look like practically in your relationships, your ambitions, and your daily decision-making?

- 04 The sermon presents communion as both a memorial and a covenant that calls believers to actively participate in the continuation of Christ's ministry - how does regularly examining your worthiness to partake in communion shape your sense of responsibility and accountability in your spiritual life?

"Let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves."

GALATIANS 5:16

Leader's note: This study asks people to name where the sinful nature has been active in their own lives, which takes real vulnerability. Go first with your own honest answer, keep the tone encouraging rather than corrective, and trust the Holy Spirit to convict – that is His job, not the group's.

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GUIDED DISCUSSION

A step-by-step path through the sermon in three sections, opening with an ice breaker.

OPENING QUESTION (ICE BREAKER)

Think about a time when you knew the right thing to do but found yourself doing the opposite. Without going into too much detail, what did that experience teach you about yourself?

SECTION 1: UNDERSTANDING THE SINFUL NATURE

The pastor defined the sinful nature as "that part of us that desires to live independent of God," that "desires to be glorified above God," and that "seeks its own way opposed to God's way."

- 01** In your own words, how would you describe the difference between the sinful nature and simply making a mistake? Why does the distinction matter?
- 02** The pastor said, "God is not asking us to go into battle with our sinful nature. He's giving that job to the Holy Spirit." How does this change the way you think about personal struggles with sin? Does this feel freeing or does it raise questions for you?

03 The pastor defined evil as anything done outside of a relationship with God, anything that disrupts or weakens that relationship, and anything that prevents a person from having a relationship with God. Does this definition challenge or expand how you have typically thought about evil? Why or why not?

04 Galatians 5:17 describes the Spirit and the sinful nature as two forces constantly fighting each other. Where do you most feel that tension in your daily life?

SECTION 2: IDENTIFYING THE SINFUL NATURE

The pastor noted that the sinful nature "conceals himself and disguises himself in the things we like" and grouped the works of the sinful nature into four categories: sensual sins, religious sins, interpersonal sins, and social sins.

01 The pastor pointed out that we often quote the fruit of the Spirit but rarely recite the works of the sinful nature. Why do you think that is? What might change if we were more honest about identifying those characteristics in our own lives?

02 Which of the four categories – sensual, religious, interpersonal, or social – do you think is most overlooked or minimized in the church today? Why?

03 The pastor said that the sinful nature is "trying to alienate us from God, weaken us in our relationship with God, and keep us from going deeper in our relationship with God." Can you identify a season in your life when one of those three things was happening? What did it look like?

04 The pastor warned about religious sins, specifically making work, church, or even a pastor a substitute for God. How do we guard against misplacing our trust or devotion in people or institutions rather than in God Himself?

SECTION 3: CRUCIFYING THE SINFUL NATURE

The pastor emphasized that the sinful nature cannot be put to death in our own strength, and that submission to the Holy Spirit is the only path to victory. He also warned that "a little leaven leavens the whole loaf" – tolerating small areas of sin gives the sinful nature room to grow.

- 01** The pastor said, "If you leave a little of that sinful nature going, he is going to take that joint over." How have you seen this principle play out – either in your own life or in the lives of people around you?

- 02** What does it practically look like to "submit to the Holy Spirit" in a moment of temptation? What habits or practices help you stay sensitive to His leading?

- 03** The pastor encouraged believers to ask themselves daily: "Am I diminishing in the characteristics of the sinful nature? And am I growing stronger in love, joy, peace, patience, and gentleness?" How would you honestly answer those questions right now?

- 04** Galatians 5:24 says that those who belong to Christ have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to His cross. What does it mean to you personally to live as though that is already done?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one or more of the following to practice individually or as a group before your next meeting.

Daily Self-Examination

Each morning this week, review both the works of the sinful nature and the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:19–23. Ask God honestly: "Which of these am I walking in today?" Journal what you notice.

Starve the Craving

The pastor taught that the sinful nature has an appetite, and if you deny it, it will weaken. Identify one specific area where you have been feeding the sinful nature – a habit, a place, a relationship pattern, or a form of entertainment – and deliberately deny it this week. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill that space.

Closet Prayer

The pastor referenced going into your closet, shutting the door, and wrestling with God the way Jacob did. Set aside intentional, uninterrupted time this week to pray – not a quick prayer, but a sustained conversation with God about an area where you need His direction or deliverance.

Accountability Partnership

Pair up with someone in the group. Share one area where you recognize the sinful nature has been active in your life. Agree to check in with each other during the week, not to judge but to encourage and pray for one another.

Memorize and Meditate

Memorize Galatians 5:16 this week. Meditate on it during moments of temptation or frustration. Let it serve as an anchor when the battle between the Spirit and the sinful nature intensifies.

CLOSE TOGETHER

CLOSING REFLECTION

"Until you die to self, you cannot truly live to God."

Take a few moments as a group to sit quietly with that statement. Then close in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to lead each person into greater victory over their sinful nature, and thanking God that the battle has already been won through Jesus Christ.

GO FURTHER

SCRIPTURE FOR FURTHER STUDY

Romans 7:14-25 — Paul's description of the internal conflict between the flesh and the spirit

Romans 8:1-14 — Living according to the Spirit, not the flesh

Ephesians 6:10-18 — The full armor of God

Colossians 3:1-10 — Putting to death what belongs to the earthly nature

1 Corinthians 10:13 — God's faithfulness in moments of temptation

GO DEEPER THIS WEEK

Join us Wednesdays at 7:30 PM for Bible Study, or bring this guide to your small group.

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