

Michigan District Lutheran Laymen's League Bible Studies for LLL Groups

“Live by the Spirit” Gal. 5:16 -- International Theme for 2008-2009

These Bible studies were written by Pastor Robert Gadeken, LLL Michigan District Pastoral Advisor, and used at the 2008 Camp Arcadia Men's Retreat, September 4-7, 2008. They may be used or adapted by LLL groups for meetings, retreats, or other situations.

LIVE BY THE _____ SPIRIT LIVE BY THE TRANSFORMING SPIRIT

1. Object Needed: Toy “Transformer” Car. Show the group the car and ask them if they know what it is. Boys love to play with cars (so do grown men). Hard to improve on this basic toy, but Hasbro Toys did. Show them how this car can be transformed into a robot and back again. Let a few of them try it. Talk about the meaning of “transform”. It is easy or hard? Does it help to know what the robot is supposed to look like?
2. Read Romans 12:1-2. What kind of transformation is Paul talking about? How is this transformation like the one from car into robot? “Brain storm” as many comparisons as possible (be creative – it might help to know the “back story” behind the cars and the movie about how dead machines became alive – it might also help to review the “back story” behind “in view of God's mercy” and talk about the cross of Jesus). What caused this change, or what powers this change (vs.1)? How does that work? What is the end result (vs.2)? Is this easy or hard? Why? Does it help to know what the end result will look like (back up to Rm. 8:28-29)? Why?
3. We will come back to Galatians 5:16-25 in each study. Read it together. How do you know what areas of your life need transforming? If people feel comfortable, share some personal things you would like to transform. If not, talk about what you would like to change in others! Then realize you have done the same thing.
4. In the story behind the transforming cars, the robots transform back into ordinary looking cars so that they can “hide” among us, without calling attention to themselves. What do you think Paul would say about Christians who transform back to fit in with the world and “hide”? If there is time, or for deeper discussion, talk about the difference between 1 Cor. 9:19-23 and Mark 14:66-72? See also 1 John 2:15-17.
5. Prayer: Dear Jesus, the forgiveness and life you gave us with a cross transforms us. Help us not to fight your Spirit as He continues His work in us. Help us instead to focus on changing those things that will please you most. In this way help us live by your Spirit. Amen.

LIVE BY THE _____ SPIRIT
LIVE BY THE CREATIVE SPIRIT

1. Object Needed: Cookie Cutter. Take some play dough, flatten it out, and use the cookie cutter to make several “cookies”. Compare the cookies. The purpose of a cookie cutter is to make a cookie of the same shape over and over and over again. Some people think that Christianity works the same way. Think about it. Last time, remember, we learned that instead of being conformed to the pattern of the world (there you can think cookie cutter – dress the same, act the same, have the same “politically correct” opinions), God wants us transformed into the image of His Son, living to please God instead of the sinful nature. But isn’t that just another kind of “pattern” to conform to? Isn’t the Holy Spirit trying to turn us all into little Christs (that is what the word Christian means, after all), like so many mindless robots on an assembly line? Isn’t the Holy Spirit in the cookie cutter business too? The answer is a definite NO! Although the world does use peer pressure to enforce a terrible sameness, God’s Spirit wants to create a fantastic multitude of difference.
2. Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-27. To “live by the Spirit” is to live with difference. It is to appreciate difference, rejoice in difference, promote difference, even strive to be different. The Holy Spirit wants to make you different. Why? How does that make you feel? Go around the group and say at least one thing about each one that is special, unique, a talent, a gift, a strength. Remember, it does not have to be a great thing, this isn’t a competition, simple gifts are the best. How can all this difference still be “the image of Christ”?
3. In Galatians 5:16-26, how many “fruits of the spirit” are there? Some people make a distinction between “fruits” and “gifts” – that is, one Christian can have all these personal qualities, called fruits, but Christians will have different abilities, called gifts. Even so, not very many Christians seem to have all the “fruits of the spirit” either, and most Christians seem to be better at some “fruits” than others. Why do you think that might be? How could we become more “fruit—full” as a Christian? See John 17:13-26. What is the relationship of the Word and the Spirit? Where will you find the Spirit’s power? What is the connection between the love of Jesus for us and our love for Him? How is that love expressed? Can it be expressed in different ways? Like what?
4. Prayer: O Lord, You live in us, and Your Spirit is at work in us. Not only do You create a new heart in us, but Your Spirit also gives gifts to us, and creates so many different kinds of abilities among us. We thank You for our differences, and pray that You would help us to use our differing gifts to serve you by serving each other. Through Jesus Christ, our Head, Amen.

LIVE BY THE _____ SPIRIT
LIVE BY THE FILLING SPIRIT

1. Object Needed: One Glove. Note that the glove by itself is limp and dead. Put your fist inside the glove so that none of your fingers are in the fingers of the glove. Note that the glove is now “alive” but that without the fingers, without the glove being “full”, the hand is pretty useless. Try to pick something up. Try to shake hands. Try to hold on to something.
2. Read Ephesians 4:14-5:2. Paul tells us that we have to grow like a body that “grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” When we become a Christian we are made alive in Christ. Our faith in Jesus gives us forgiveness and a new relationship with God. We are no longer like the dead glove. Faith in the heart is like a hand in the center of a glove, but it has not yet “gown” into all the other fingers or other areas of our life where our “work” lies. New Christians, or “immature” Christians, are alive in Christ, but their lives are pretty useless – God cannot use them to accomplish very much in the world. It is only as the Spirit’s power extends into all the areas of our life that we become His hands in the world. Think of each finger. How does the Holy Spirit want to change your family life (vs. 25-27, 29-32)? How does the Holy Spirit want to change your work life (vs. 28)? How does the Holy Spirit want to change your entertainment life (vs. 29-30)? How does the Holy Spirit want to change your worship life (vs. 32 –5:2)? How does the Holy Spirit want to change your stewardship life (vs. 28)?
3. Read Eph. 4:17-24 again. How are these changes made? How does the Holy Spirit grow into each area of your life? Check Gal. 5:16-25 again. Paul uses violent words like “put off” the old nature, which is in “conflict” with God, and he even says we must “crucify” the sinful nature. These do not describe a “fun” or an “enjoyable” process. What do they describe? Though not fun, they do describe a very rewarding and a very fulfilling process. What do you think Paul meant by “fight the good fight of faith”? How do we fight this battle so as to win? Check Eph. 6:10-18.
4. Many Christians today think that to be “filled with the Spirit” is to experience strange powers and miracles like speaking in tongues and healing, but in this study you have learned that being filled with the Spirit is really about something else. What does being filled with the Spirit of God look like? With every finger we add to the glove we become more and more useful to God (see 2 Tim. 2:19-21). In what area of life do you think it is hardest to “turn away from wickedness” and become an “instrument for noble purposes ... useful to the Master”?
5. Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, we want You to be Lord not just of our hearts but of our lives. Help us to grow, letting Your Spirit rule in more and more areas of our life so that we become Your useful hands in this world. Amen.

