



“Hot Topics: Social Media”
Galatians 5:16-6:5

Main Point: God calls you to walk by the Spirit in every area of your life.

Reminders for walking by the Spirit — even on social media:

God calls you to walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh (5:16-24).

The primary command in these verses is to “walk by the Spirit” in verse 16. The following verses provide guidance and definition for what that means, laying out the fruit of the flesh (although not an exhaustive list) as opposed to the fruit of the Spirit. The believer must understand and know that in Christ they have crucified the flesh. The fruit of the flesh must be dead to them as they live and walk in the Spirit. Applied to social media, the list connected to the fruit of the flesh is helping in considering all of the ways that social media can be abused and misused in order to feed fleshly desire and to produce the fruit of the flesh. On the other hand, social media can be used to feed the desires of the Spirit, providing an avenue in life to express and to share the fruit of the Spirit through the life of the believer. Then and now, the call is for reliance on the Spirit and discipline in the Spirit in order to walk by the Spirit in life. For the believer today, it takes God’s grace and power in reliance, discipline, and purpose to resist the temptations that social media present and to pursue the Spirit-led and Spirit-glorifying life.

1. Read and discuss verses 16-24. What do these verses reveal to you about God? What do these verses reveal to you about sinful humanity? What do these verses reveal to you about God’s design for the Gospel at work in the life of a believer?
2. Go through the list of the fruit of the flesh. In what ways are these fruit present in the use of social media? In your use of social media, in what way are you most tempted?
3. Go through the evidences of the fruit of the Spirit. In what ways can the fruit of the Spirit be expressed in your life in your use of social media?
4. Pray for protection for your group and your families. Ask that the Holy Spirit will fill you daily and that He will guide you especially in your use of social media.
5. Read Phil. 4:1-10. Discuss how to apply what you learn in your use of social media.

Walking by the Spirit demands keeping in step with the Spirit (5:25-26).

Paul exhorts believers who are walking by the Spirit to keep in step with the Spirit. But how is the fruit of the Spirit displayed in the lives of believers? How is patience revealed? How is gentleness revealed? The reality is that the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit is most often seen on a day-to-day basis through your interaction and relationships with others. The fruit of the Spirit in your life is regularly produced through the expression of your relationship and of your heart towards others. In a very practical way, keeping in step with the Spirit means guarding your heart against root sins like conceit and envy, which often produce provocation in relationships. Applying these verses to your life on social media, God’s Word provides some great points for self-examination on keeping in step with the Spirit. Use the questions below to examine your hearts and your steps on social media.

1. Read and discuss verses 25-26. What does God's Word want you to know and to do?
2. Are you revealing conceit in your posts or perhaps in your response or attitude towards the posts from others?
3. Are you experiencing envy in seeing the positive things that are happening in the lives of others or in other groups or organizations? If so, why, and how can you guard against this?
4. Do you ever post anything with a hidden hope in your heart that your post will provoke a hurtful or negative reaction or emotion in the heart of someone else? How can you protect against this in your use of social media?

Walking by the Spirit is seen in your relationship with others (6:1-5).

- *You're called to restore others from sin and not to ignore sin (1);*
- *You're called to bear burdens and not just to share burdens (2-3);*
- *You're called to test yourself and not just post the best on yourself (4-5).*

There are three important imperatives in these five verses, which include the command to restore a believer who is caught in any transgression; the command to bear one another's burdens; and the command to test yourself. Applied to social media, these are really important commands. Social media opens up a new level of accountability within the body of Christ. In a positive sense, social media provides a means for communication where the reality of struggles with sin are often on display for "friends" to see. Social media can provide a way of ministry within the body of Christ, providing a broad avenue for sharing burdens and garnering support. At its best, social media provides a platform for appropriate transparency and self-examination. All of these are possible positives connected to social media, but the possible negatives are just as easily available. Social media can provide an easy avenue for making fun of, sharing, and/or exploiting the sin and failures of others. Social media can be a convenient cop-out for truly bearing the burdens of others in the body of Christ, when sharing replaces bearing. Social media can also be a great temptation for presenting one's best side rather than honest and transparent self-examination.

1. Read and discuss verses 1-5. Discuss what the three commands in these verses mean in the life of a believer. In a practical way, what should these commands look like in the life of your small group?
2. "Any transgression" means any when it comes to addressing sin in our lives, so what do you do when you see someone sinning on social media? You're informed, which means you're accountable to your brother or sister in Christ, so do you work to restore or to ignore? Why, or why not?
3. You are called to bear one another's burdens. Do you bear the burden, or do you just share the burden — virtually or verbally? Why, or why not?
4. You are called to test yourself. Do you truly test yourself when it comes to social media, or do you just post and present the best of yourself? Why, or why not?