

Grace Group Discussion Guide

For the week of September 15 - 21, 2019

Main Passages and Thought:

*"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed **fig leaves** together and made coverings for themselves. ⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and **they hid from the Lord God** among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?' ¹⁰He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; **so I hid.**'" (Genesis 3:6-10 NIV)*

After Adam and Eve sinned, they covered up their "nakedness" (feelings of shame and guilt) with "fig leaves." Instead of **opening up** to God, they **covered-up** and hid. Like them, we cover-up and hide our feelings of guilt and shame with our own "fig leaves" or as the Bible calls living by "**the flesh.**" Negative behaviors like lashing out in anger, addictions to alcohol, drugs, sex, pornography, excessive eating, controlling tendencies, etc., are some of the ways we cope by "the flesh." Even positive behaviors such as busyness, or an excessive drive to succeed, can be ways we cover and hide as well. Living by "the flesh" always has consequences to our health and our relationships with God and others. Furthermore, these behaviors become habitual and difficult to break free from.

"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free... ¹⁶So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." (Galatians 5:13, 16-25 NIV)

Freedom comes when we open up to God and live by "**the Spirit**" rather than cover-up and live by "the flesh." Through Him, we experience "fruit of the Spirit" in our lives of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc. The first step to freedom is identifying our "fig leaves," the things we do to cover-up and hide in order to deal with the pain and pressures of life.

Reflection: *(Break into groups of 3-4 to discuss)*

- What are some of the ways you cope when you are stressed, angry, fearful, anxious, etc.? What do you do to make those negative feelings go away?
- How does the way you cope affect yourself and others around you?

Application:

- What do you think God thinks about how you cope with the pressures of life? Are there any changes that He would want you to make? Explain.

Prayer: *(Break into pairs and take turns praying for each other)*

- Pray for one another to clearly identify our "fig leaves" and to choose to trust in God rather than the "fig leaves."