



FLOURISHING

Week of August 27 Flourishing in Character¹

Overview:

This sermon series will center around the idea of *flourishing* in our relationships with God, with others, and ourselves. When we live in *shalom* with one another, we also bring wholeness, peace, and reconciliation to our city and our world. The word *shalom* in the Hebrew bible carries this idea of flourishing – not just living “at peace” with one another but calling out the best in others through ethical economics, education centered on truth, physical health, and creative beauty. We are called to live in such a way that others are drawn into the abundant life that Jesus provides.

Group Objectives:

Relationships and Life Transformation are the primary purpose of community groups.

- Reflect on this past Sunday’s message and other devotional reading.
- Pray together and provide encouragement for other group members.
- To reflect on what it means to live out a character of wholeness and peace.

DNA statement(s) tie-in:

- *We are empowered by the Holy Spirit.* The Holy Spirit within us enables us to live life beyond belief—a life filled with joy, purpose, and power. We live in a supernatural reality that includes yet transcends the physical universe.

Conversation Starters:

- Who is the best person you have ever known? What makes them different?
- What stood out to you from this week’s sermon?

Listening to God

- Where did you experience God last week? How were you able to join God on mission?

Learning from God’s Word: Bible Study Discussion

Character is the combination of all the behaviors and qualities that make you, you. It is distinct to each individual but can only be classified as “good” or “bad” in relation to a standard. As believers in Jesus, our standard comes from the word of God through the Bible. We will never reach perfection this side of heaven, but God works in and through us to transform our minds as we grow in our faith. However, when we attempt to act out what we believe is “good” without allowing the Spirit to transform us from within, it causes a stressful disconnect and wreaks havoc in our lives.

¹ This discussion guide was written by Rachel Vaughn and edited by Dawn Gentry.

- **Read *Philippians 4:4-9***
 - What do prayer and thanksgiving have to do with preventing anxiety? Why do you think Paul connects this with the command to rejoice?
 - What does “peace which transcends understanding” look like? What is it guarding your heart against?
 - How do you “think on” truth? What kind of truth does Paul mean? How do you determine what is true?
 - How does what we think about affect our character? (*compare Proverbs 23:7*)
- **Read *Galatians 5:13-26***
 - What does it mean to walk by the Spirit?
 - How can Paul describe us as “free” if we cannot do whatever we want (v 13, 17)?
 - Compare the “acts of the flesh” to the “fruit of the Spirit.” How do they each affect our relationships with those around us?

Leaning into Obedience:

- How do you sense God calling you to respond to this passage?
 - Is there an example to follow? A command to obey?
- How can the group encourage you this week as you respond?
- Consider each encounter you have this week.
 - Where is it easy to walk by the Spirit?
 - Where do you tend toward the acts of the flesh?
 - What are ways you can guard your mind and heart in these difficult areas?

Prayer Prompts:

- Invite members of the group to share requests.
- Allow time for silent reflection on the following questions.
What do I spend my time thinking about?
When is it difficult for me to show love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?
- Read Psalm 32 aloud, allowing the group time to meditate on the words.

For further study:

- James Bryan Smith, *The Good and Beautiful Life: Putting on the Character of Christ* (2009)
- Rich Villodas, *Good and Beautiful and Kind: Becoming Whole in a Fractured World* (2023)
- Tim Mackie, “Character of God,” Video series,
<https://app.rightnowmedia.org/en/content/details/434053>
- Bible Project, “The Spirit and the Fruit,” <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/i-am-who-i-am-part-6-spirit-and-fruit/>