



THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Disciples & Early Church • U3#4 1st-3rd Gr. • Sept.8, 2024

Concept

The fruit of the Spirit, i.e., God’s character, grows in us as we learn to walk in the Spirit.

Goal

Students will learn that the fruit of the Spirit grows in us as we learn to trust in God.

Passage

Galatians 5:22-23, John 15:1-17

Key Verse: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control..." Galatians 5:22, 23

Planning Ahead

| Lesson Supplies | Craft Supplies |
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| <p>Learning Activity #2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A glass jar</i> • <i>Vinegar 1 cup/class</i> • <i>Baking Soda 1 tablespoon/class</i> • <i>Aluminum pie pan</i> <p>Learning Activity #3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the "Fruit of the Spirit?" handout, 1/student | <p>Activity Stations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tape/CD player</i> • <i>"Fruit of the Spirit" Tape or CD</i> • Black & white printed "Fruit-Ominos," 1 set/student • Ziploc sandwich bags, 1/student • Markers • Scissors • Dry erase marker |

*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the italicized areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

Background Information (for the teacher)

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"No matter how little time I spend truly focused on the things of the Spirit during a given day, that time counts! During that time I have released the power of the Spirit into my thinking and my life, and He will work accordingly. If I do the same the next day, He will work again. At the end of a year, these moments with God may add up to an embarrassingly small amount of time. Yet God has been free to work unfettered during this time, and the result will be tangible." [1]

"So often we find ourselves disgusted about what someone has just done. 'I can't believe she said that! She's a real...!' we tell ourselves. Our struggles with others are often played out on the horizontal plane. It's me versus my spouse, me versus my boss, me versus my kids. The events in my life seem to swirl around in a jumble of often disappointing hurts. What am I doing wrong?

"This is the horizontal perspective. God wants us to learn to look at our lives vertically as well as horizontally. He wants us to open the door to our daily lives and let Him into our thinking.

"When our friend makes a mean comment, we can either spend our time reflecting on how bad she is, or we can step back mentally from the conflict and ask, 'God, what are You trying to do here?' When we do the latter, we are considering our daily lives from God's perspective. We are interpreting our experience theocentrically (with God at the center) instead of anthropocentrically (with man at the center). We can call this perspective the vertical perspective, because it recognizes that what God is doing is the most important variable to grasp and will give light to everything else."

The fruit of the Spirit is a picture of Christ-likeness. Our view of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control is often not the same as God's. Our problem is that we selfishly want to be the recipients of this fruit. But the fruit of the Spirit that God desires results from an other-centered lifestyle. Exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit as a believer is a witness to the non-Christian world that a person is a follower of Christ. Jesus states in Matthew 7:15-23 that all people are known by their fruit. Jesus used the analogy of a branch and vine to give us a concrete picture of the necessity to abide in Christ. Just as the branch of an apple tree must be connected to the trunk in order to grow and eventually bear apples, so Christians must abide in Christ to grow strong in the Lord and bear fruit (John 15:1-6). As a tree requires various elements such as fertilizer, sunshine, and rain in order to grow, Christians must abide in the vine to grow and mature in Christ. As Christians abide in Christ and seek to know Him more through the means of growth, (i.e., the Word, prayer, fellowship/ministry, discipline), spiritual maturity and the subsequent bearing of fruit occurs.

[1] Dennis McCallum, *Walking in Victory*, ©1994, NavPress, p. 122.

Instructions: Coordinate with other classes to combine for the Drama.

Activity Stations:

- **Growth**
 - **Instructions:** As students arrive, one by one measure the height of each and place a mark on the white board labeled with the student's name. After each student is measured, instruct him/her to grow!! Work as hard as possible to grow! Strain!! Try to grow for about a minute and then come back to be re-measured. To these students this will seem just as ridiculous as it really is. The point here is to make the analogy that while we all realize that it is impossible to make ourselves grow physically by merely trying, we often do just that, i.e., "try hard" when it comes to spiritual growth.
- **Craft/Game-"Fruit-Ominos"**
 - **Instructions:** Give each student a set of the five sheets of "fruit-ominos" and a Ziploc sandwich bag. Color the letters and hearts and cut the "fruit-ominos" apart. Put the "fruit-ominos" in the sandwich bag. Put a piece of masking tape on the outside of the bag and write their name on the tape. As the students work on their "fruit-ominos," discuss each of the fruits and what they look like in your life. Students can find a partner and use their "fruit-ominos" to play a game. The game is played just like dominos.
- **Music**
 - **Instructions:** Play the tape as the students play fruit-ominos.

When an apple seed is planted in the ground eventually an apple tree grows if the conditions are right. Some of those conditions include water, fertilizer, and sunshine. As that apple tree gets older apples will be produced. God created the seed and He continues to work through nature to grow apples from a seed. Just as God works through nature to grow apples on a tree, God wants to work in you to grow the fruit of the Spirit. Our key verse is, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control..." (Galatians 5:22, 23). The fruit of the Spirit grows in us as we learn to depend on God. God is the one who causes the growth.

In the beginning of class some of you were measured. Why didn't any of you grow? Didn't you try hard enough? We all know this is ridiculous. Growth doesn't happen because we try hard to grow. God made our bodies to grow and mature and He causes the growth. However, there are some things you can do to help yourself grow over time: eat right, exercise, and get enough sleep. So even though God causes the growth of your body, you can help or hinder that growth by your choices. In the same way, even though God causes our spiritual growth and the fruit of the Spirit is not produced in us because we try hard to be loving, patient, kind and so on, we can help or hinder growth by our choices.

Just as physical walking involves three elements (balance, direction, and locomotion), walking by the Spirit also involves three elements:

Set your mind on things of the Spirit

Spiritual growth begins not with what we do or with what we feel—but with how we think. As we learn to set our minds on what God wants them set on, the power of the Holy Spirit gradually changes our characters and behavior and produces more and more of the fruit of the Spirit in us.

What are the "things of the Spirit" that we should set our minds on? "Setting your mind on the things of the Spirit" is choosing to learn about what Christ has given us and to think about all that He has given us. As we choose to think this way God's Spirit changes us.

For example: As human beings our natural tendency is to think of God more as a strict parent/principal/supervisor, ready to jump on every mistake we make. This is why we often tend to avoid Him when we think we have been bad. But, the Bible says that God will never condemn His children. God does not want us to be afraid of his rejection, but to be confident of his love. He wants us to know that if we are His sons and daughters that nothing (including our own sins) can separate us from His love. The more we set our minds on or think about these great truths, the more often we will want to talk to God and to be honest with Him. As we do this we become very thankful to God.

Learn to depend on the Spirit

Learn to listen to Him through His word and through the "nudges" or convictions He gives us. Learn to depend on Him by admitting that you can't always keep the right attitude or desire to do the things He wants you to do. Determine to do the right things and ask Him to empower you to do them. Romans 6:13 says to present the members of our bodies to God as instruments of righteousness because that is freedom and a free life.

Choose to live for others rather than yourself

Learning to walk by the Spirit takes practice. It's a lot like learning to ride a bike which is difficult because you have to do three things all at the same time: balance, steer, and pedal. Similarly, walking by the Spirit involves keeping your mind set on the things of the Spirit, learning to depend on the Spirit and choosing to live for others rather than yourself. As you practice, this becomes easier and more natural—but it is never as natural as riding a bike because we will always be tempted to think about ourselves, to depend on ourselves and to live for ourselves.

Transition

The drama team is going to do a skit for us about the fruit of the Spirit. Let's get together with the other classes to watch the skit.

Learning Activity#1 Lg. Group

Transition

Learning Activity#2 Lg. Group

"Fruit for Sale" performed by the Drama Team.

Let's go back to our classrooms and try an experiment.

Object Lesson

Instructions: Put the jar on the pie plate. Put the vinegar in the jar and add the baking soda at the appropriate time.

Debrief: This vinegar represents a Christian. This baking soda represents God. By itself the vinegar produces nothing. But look what happens when I add the baking soda to it. Makes a huge difference, doesn't it? Spiritually, we are like the vinegar without the baking soda. Without God we can do nothing of any significance. Open your Bibles to John 15 and read verses 4, 5 with me. Who is the Vine? (Christ is the vine.) Who is "me?" (Christ is.) What does it mean to remain in me? (It means to live in close relationship with God, to depend on - trust in - Him to work in and through us.) A branch must be attached to a tree to grow. If it is not attached it dies, doesn't it?

Likewise, we must have a relationship with God before we can grow spiritually. Who can tell me how to have a relationship with God?

When we start a relationship with God, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us and we need to learn to walk according to or by the Spirit. When we walk by the Spirit, we choose to keep our mind set on the Spirit, to depend on the Spirit to empower us to do His work and choose to sacrifice for the sake of others. As we do that, God does His part. He produces the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Our key verse is, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control..." (Galatians 5:22,23).

Let's get in small groups to talk about how to walk by the Spirit so the fruit of the Spirit will be produced in us.

Discussion Questions:

- How can we learn to depend on the Spirit? How many of you like broccoli? How do you learn to like broccoli? Try a little, then a little more, finally like broccoli. Same with Holy Spirit – listen to what He says, do what He says – a little, then more. Try to do what He asks. As you keep doing more, it is easier to trust and depend on Him.
- (Admit we can't keep our minds set, depend on Him or live sacrificially and ask for His help. Learn what the Bible says so we will know if we are acting according to God's truth or not...)

Transition

Learning Activity#3 Sm. Groups

Learning Activity#3 Continued

- Do you like it when adults tell you what to do? How does it make you feel? How do you feel when God tells you what to do? The Holy Spirit is God and He helps us know what God wants us to do and how to live. Is it hard to obey Him? Why is it hard? (Giving up control; want to do things our own way). Control is a difficult thing to give up. It would be a good thing to share your struggle with the students.
- How can we expect to change if we are willing to obey the Holy Spirit in our lives? As we walk by the Spirit we will produce much fruit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control..." (Galatians 5:22-23).
- If time permits, discuss a few of these. (What do you think of when you hear the word "love?" What would someone who has self-control look like?) Because these are fruits of living by the Spirit, they reflect God's character and goodness. The meaning of these words is often watered down or changed so it doesn't seem so impossible. It's important to know what the Bible means by these words because the world's definition is very different from God's definition of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. I'll give each of you a "Fruit of the Spirit" paper to take home with you to discuss with your family and friends.

Missions Prayer: Talk about and pray for the Oasis Giving Campaign.

Let's pray that God will teach us how to live in trust in or dependence on Him. Let's also pray that those who don't yet know Jesus will understand how much He loves them and wants them to know Him.

Transition

We are going to play a fun game to help us remember the names of the fruit of the Spirit.

Learning Activity#4 Lg. Group

Game—"Fruit (of the Spirit) Basket Upset

Instruction: Arrange chairs in a circle so that there is one chair less than there are players. One player will be "it" and stand in the middle. The rest of the students should be seated in the chairs. Assign a fruit of the Spirit to each student so they are evenly divided among the students: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-Control. Once each student, including the one in the center, is assigned a "fruit" name, the fun begins. The player in the center calls out a fruit of the spirit – say "love," then all those who are "love" must get up and find another chair in which to sit. At the same time the player in the center will also try to find a seat. The player left standing becomes "it" and gets to call the next fruit of the Spirit. If the center player calls "fruit basket," everyone must get up and find a new chair.