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Discover
**THE FRUIT
OF THE SPIRIT**



LEADER GUIDE

Discover
**THE FRUIT
OF THE SPIRIT**



by
Edith Bajema


**FAITH
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Christian Resources

Grand Rapids, Michigan

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ISBN 1-59255-208-0

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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To the Leader

Prepare the Lesson

This leader guide is meant to assist you as a small group leader but not to substitute for your own work. As you prepare to lead each lesson, work first through the questions in the study guide. Then use the leader material to enrich your understanding of the passage.

To avoid giving the impression that you have an answer book or that you know all the answers, we suggest that you not take the leader guide to the Bible study session. After all, the answers are in the Bible, and you are a guide to help your group find the answers in God's Word.

Prepare thoroughly before leading each group session so that you can lead without frequent references to notes. This approach will free you to concentrate on leadership responsibilities, keep eye contact with group members, and listen carefully.

Get Ready to Lead

Learn to think in terms of questions. As you prepare to lead a lesson, ask yourself questions and try to discover the answers yourself. This will prepare you to anticipate group members' questions and thus help others discover truths from God's Word.

Lead with Questions

Use questions to direct the group discussion. Draw out positive contributions by asking questions. Break down difficult or unclear questions with smaller, concise ones. Also use questions to respond to wrong or problematic answers. If you learn to lead others to truth by questions, you will be a good Bible discovery leader. The questions in this study are designed to be used with the New International Version of the Bible, but other translations can also be used.

Help to Apply

Gently help group members discover the meaning of God's message for their own lives. Be careful not to be judgmental of persons who may not yet seem to be applying the truths you encounter together. It's the Spirit's work to apply God's Word to people's hearts. Tactfully let the group know how the Spirit is applying the Word in your own heart and life. Pray faithfully for the Spirit's work in others.

While giving people the time and space to apply biblical truths as the Spirit leads them, simply try to help group members see that there is a relationship between the Bible and life. Questions for reflection at the end of each session invite everyone to take some time for personal reflection and

optional sharing. Try to offer at least a few minutes for reflection time toward the end of each lesson, and encourage group members to do follow-up reflection at home.

Leadership Training

If more than one group in your setting is using this Bible study, we strongly encourage leaders to meet regularly for discussion of the lessons, for prayer, and for mutual support.

If this study is being used in a Coffee Break Small Groups program, each leader should have a copy of the *Coffee Break Evangelism Manual with Director's Handbook*. This book is a basic "how-to" guide for establishing and leading a Bible discovery group. Reread the book or portions of it periodically and review it at the beginning of each season.

Leading with Love in the Coffee Break Core Values series is another important tool for leadership development.

Leaders will also find it helpful to attend one or more of the many leadership training workshops offered each year in connection with small group ministry.

For more information,

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Introduction

Everyone wants a fruitful life. No one wants to be like a dry, withered branch that gets cut off and thrown away. People want to be productive, vibrant, enjoying a life filled with purpose and meaning.

The Scriptures tell us the secret to the fruitful life. It's a purpose-filled life that brings blessing to others. It's a life filled with qualities that draw others—qualities like love and gentleness, peace and goodness, kindness and self-control.

But we can't produce the fruitful life on our own. We are like branches on a vine, depending wholly on the vine to supply the life flowing through us, making it possible for fruit to grow. And that life-giving vine is Jesus.

The secret to the fruitful life is in our relationship with Jesus. Our closeness to him—or our lack of it—will directly affect how well we bear fruit for him in our lives. And our openness to his Spirit's work in us—or our lack of it—will directly affect how fully our Lord's character forms within us. That character, reflecting the inner nature of God, is the fruit of the Spirit growing in us.

And what fruit it is! Nothing can compare to the beauty of this fruit that displays the very character of God:

- love that doesn't quit, that keeps giving when others have given up
- joy that fills the heart even in the most desperate circumstances
- peace that surpasses our ability to understand
- patience that endures, trusting in God's wisdom and timing
- compassionate kindness for others in their weakness
- genuine goodness that reveals the holiness of God
- faithfulness that stands firm and even grows stronger through testing (temptation) and fierce trial
- gentle strength that makes even the weakest and most insecure feel loved and safe
- self-control so disciplined that it guides us to do what is right

If you're looking for this kind of fruit in your life, this study based on Galatians 5:22-23 and other Scriptures is meant for you. Discover how the fruit of the Spirit can grow in you so that you can live the fruitful, free life God intends for us all.

Glossary of Terms

Abraham (also called Abram)—the father of the Israelite nation, called by God to leave his homeland and follow in faith to the land God promised to show him (Gen. 11:26-25:10). He is called “the father of all who believe” (Rom. 4:11; see Gal. 3:29).

apostle—one who is sent to bring the good news message of Jesus Christ as Savior. This term is usually used to refer only to those who were witnesses of the resurrected Jesus (1 Cor. 15:3-11).

atonement sacrifice—refers to *atonement*, which means “to cover over”; a sacrifice that made amends for wrongdoing (Lev. 16). By dying in our place to pay the penalty for sin, Jesus was the “atonement sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 2:2; 4:10).

blaspheme—to scoff at or revile the name of God.

Counselor—see **Holy Spirit**

cross—a torturous instrument of execution used by the Roman Empire in the days of the early church. Jesus was crucified on a cross made from a wooden crossbeam positioned on a pole with space above his head to hang a sign that read, “THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS” (Luke 23:38).

eternal life—the state of being forgiven and receiving new life as a child of God. This new life begins when one receives Christ by faith as Savior and Lord (2 Cor. 5:17). Having eternal life does not mean believers will not suffer physical death, but they will enjoy fellowship forever with God in this life and after death—and completely when their souls reunite with their resurrected bodies after Jesus returns and they live with God in the new heaven and new earth (1 Pet. 1:3-9; Rev. 21:1-4).

faith—“being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Heb. 11:1). True faith consists of accepting as true all that God has revealed in the Bible and being confident that all one’s sins are forgiven through Christ’s **atonement sacrifice**.

fear (of the Lord)—respectful awe of God’s power and holiness, combined with love for God and obedience to God’s will.

grace—God’s kindness, undeserved favor, and forgiving love, won for believers through Christ’s death in their place.

Holy Spirit—The Holy Spirit is God, just as God the Father and God the Son (Jesus Christ) are God. They are three persons in one being. Now that Jesus has died for our sins, conquered death, and ascended to heaven to rule at the Father’s right hand, the Holy Spirit comes to live in our hearts to guide us and shape us to become like Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 1:3-23). God’s Spirit, whom Jesus calls “the Counselor” in John 14:16, supplies us

with the mind, heart, and power of God to produce in us the character of God, described in Galatians 5:22-23 as the fruit of the Spirit.

holy—set apart in a special way to bring glory to God; refers to being (declared) perfect in purity, goodness, righteousness.

hope—in combination with faith this means looking ahead in solid trust to the fulfillment of all God's promises (see Heb. 11:1).

humility—the state of humbling oneself to serve God in obedience and gratitude in response to God's salvation in Christ (see Phil. 2:1-13).

Isaac—son of Abraham and father of Jacob; Isaac was the son whom God promised to Abraham and Sarah in their old age.

Jacob—the son of Isaac who wrestled with God and was renamed Israel (Gen. 32:28); his twelve sons became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen. 49:1-28).

justified—declared righteous (right with God) through faith in Jesus Christ, who met the law's just demands by becoming the **atonement sacrifice** for our sins.

law—God's standard for holy living, summarized in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:6-21) and in various other passages (see Mic. 6:8; Matt. 22:37-40).

mercy—this term is often used to describe showing kindness to someone in distress. To be more precise, it refers to showing leniency by holding back punishment even if justice calls for it.

Noah—builder of the ark that saved his family and all kinds of land animals from the worldwide punishment of sin in the Great Flood (Gen. 6-9).

prophecy, prophet—message or messenger sent by God to speak to God's people; this gift or role sometimes includes foretelling future events that God wants people to know about.

righteous, righteousness—being right with God, perfectly conformed to God's will and free from any guilt or sin. God regards believers as righteous through faith in Christ as our one Savior from sin. Righteousness relates to goodness as a quality of the fruit of the Spirit because it means doing what is right and good in all situations, as Jesus did.

salvation—freedom from death and from punishment for sin. God gives salvation to all who repent and confess their sins and believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Sarah—wife of Abraham, mother of Isaac. She was far past childbearing age when she gave birth to Isaac, the child promised to her and Abraham (Gen. 18:1-15; 21:1-7).

sin offering—an offering made to atone for sin (Lev. 16); see **atonement sacrifice**.

sinful nature—the polluted, destructive nature we are born with because of human sin. The sinful nature enslaves us to be disobedient and rebellious toward God, and the only way to be rid of it is to put it to death by the power of the Holy Spirit living in us.

sons of God, sonship—being a son of God or having sonship refers to being a child of God (whether we are male or female) and thus enjoying the privilege of inheriting the salvation bought for us by our Lord, Savior, and Brother, Jesus, the Son of God. In biblical times (and in some cultures still today) only sons received a portion of the family inheritance.

tongues (speaking in tongues)—a gift of the Spirit in which a person speaks languages she or he has not learned before. The apostles spoke in various known tongues on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all believers (Acts 2:1-11), and other believers have spoken in “tongues of angels” (1 Cor. 13:1). The Bible cautions that the gift of tongues may be used in worship only if someone is available to interpret “for the strengthening of the church” (1 Cor. 14:26-28).

transgression—sin; refers to crossing over a line or boundary set by God for obedience.

Lesson 1

Galatians 5:13-26; John 15:1-8

The Fruit of Freedom

Introductory Notes

Our first lesson in this study deals with freedom—freedom from the control of our sinful nature, and freedom to grow in God’s nature. If we yield to the Spirit’s work in our lives, we’ll see fruit that we never dreamed possible: God’s own character growing within us.

It’s important to see that this growth is an ongoing process. Fruit does not grow overnight. The fruit of the Spirit develops from God’s cultivation and pruning in our lives and from our remaining close (in God’s strength) to Jesus and his Word.

This process also involves struggle. The original sinful nature we are born with does not die completely when we come to faith in Christ. It is still alive and kicking. Our old habits, old ways of thinking, old desires—all these can frustrate the growth of fruit in our lives.

So be honest with group members about the need for growth and about the ongoing struggle with sin. It will be helpful for newcomers to see that Christians are not expected to be immediately perfect. It will be helpful for longtime believers to hear that others like them still struggle with the old nature of sin.

But don’t lose sight of the freedom and hope we have in Christ. Jesus has made it possible for us to bear the fruit of God’s Spirit, and Jesus himself is “the vine” who supplies all we need as his “branches” to flourish and bear fruit (John 15:5).

This first lesson is full of encouragement from the Scriptures: Christ has freed us from slavery to sin so that we can live by God’s law not as legalists but as Jesus’ faithful followers. And in Christ we have the Holy Spirit living in us so that we can bear God’s character and likeness—something the law could never do for us! (See Gal. 2:15-4:7.) If we remain close to Jesus Christ, spiritual fruit will grow naturally in our lives because of his presence and influence.

So let’s begin this study with a sense of hope and anticipation. Pray earnestly beforehand for group members who will be studying the Scriptures with you, asking that God will give them the honesty, humility, and insight to see where their lives may be unfruitful. Pray that they may have a sense of God’s desire for a close relationship with them that will bear spiritual fruit in their lives. Pray that you as a leader may be honest and open to the Spirit’s guidance in your life as well.

In addition, take time daily throughout this study to draw close to Jesus. He promises, “Remain in me, and I will remain in you. . . . [And you] will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:4-5). Spend time each day in God’s Word, listening to and receiving God’s teaching and love. Focus on specific qualities of spiritual fruit (“love, joy, peace, patience . . .”—Gal. 5:22) that you desire to see growing in your life. You’ll be amazed at how quickly fruit grows as a result of these times with him.

Optional Share Question

Note: The optional share question in each lesson may serve well at the beginning of your session, or it may fit better at some other time during your discussion. Use or adapt each share question in a way that works best for your group.

What is your favorite kind of fruit? Describe the best-tasting fruit you’ve ever eaten.

Give group members a few minutes to describe the pleasure they’ve had in tasting what surely is one of God’s most delightful gifts: crisp apples, tart berries, juicy apricots and peaches, plums bursting with flavor, sweet mangoes and papayas. Our lasting impressions of the fresh taste, fragrance, and beauty of fruit may help explain why God chose fruit as an image of the good things that can grow in our lives through the work of the Holy Spirit.

1. *Galatians 5:13-15*

The context of Galatians 5 may require some explanation as you work your way through these discussion questions, particularly if there are newcomers or new believers in your group. A good study Bible such as the *NIV Study Bible* (Zondervan, 2002) can help you supply a brief summary, if needed. Try to allow group members to discover as much as they can, however, before assisting with additional information.

- a. *What key concept in verse 13 describes the believer?*

The believer is described as “free.” The concept of *freedom in Christ* is central to this passage in Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

- **What do you like about the word *freedom*?**

In today’s world we often think of freedom in terms of independence, democracy (“the people rule”), and human rights, and we’ll often go to great lengths to preserve these good things. The privileges of freedom and having choices are among life’s most precious qualities.

- **What would it be like to live without freedom, without choices?**

Talk about slavery and how it can demean people and destroy their spirit, frustrating their God-given desires to be all they can be.

- **Do we ever feel this way in our lives, even if we live in a “free” society? In what ways would you like to see more freedom in your life?**

Help group members see that there are different kinds of freedom: political, emotional, spiritual.

- b. What does it mean that believers are “called to be free”? What have believers been freed from?*

Give group members plenty of room to offer their own ideas here; it will be helpful to you as a group leader to hear what they think regarding freedom from the law. Invite people to look up the brief definition of “law” in the glossary, if needed.

- **Is it possible to obey God’s law perfectly? What keeps us from being able to do so?**

Briefly review the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:6-21), if necessary, as a summary of God’s law.

- **What do you think the words “sinful nature” refer to?**

Your discussion should note that, prior to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the only way people knew how to be acceptable to God was to obey all of God’s law perfectly. But no one who had the natural tendency to sin (inherited from our first parents, Adam and Eve—Gen. 3) could ever do that, so Jesus, who was sinless, came to fulfill the law perfectly and took the punishment for human sin on himself. He could do that because he was fully human and fully God. Because of Jesus’ finished work, God now accepts us on the basis of Jesus’ righteousness (perfect obedience to God). So when we believe in Jesus’ power to pay for our sin, we are

- free from the slavery of the sinful nature.
- free from having to keep the law perfectly in order to be saved.
- free from the guilt of sin.
- free from the fear of punishment and not being good enough for God to love us.
- free to begin living by God’s law (like Jesus) in the power of the Holy Spirit.

If group members have further questions, you may want to suggest that they read Galatians 2:15-4:7 for more background. (See also Matt. 3:13-17; 5:17-18; Rom. 3:19-31; 5:1-6:4; Heb. 1:1-3; 2:14-18; 4:14-16.)

- c. *What command summarizes God's law, and how does this help us in using our freedom?*

Freedom in Christ is good news. It calls us to “serve one another in love” (Gal. 5:13). Indeed, says Paul, “the entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (5:14; see Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39). With this reminder Paul is urging us to use our freedom in Christ to follow God's way of love rather than “to indulge the sinful nature” (Gal. 5:13).

- **What examples can you give of indulging the sinful nature?**
- **How does serving one another in love go against the sinful nature?**

Serving one another in love is the distinguishing mark of believers; it's how believers are to treat each other (see John 13:35). But this can be difficult because remnants of the old sinful nature still cling to us (see Rom. 7:15-8:4). Mention how difficult it can be to put others' needs and interests on a level equal to our own. You might also share about times in your life when you've found it hard to “serve one another in love.”

If you have time, review some of the specific commands of God's law that deal with how we are to treat others. (See Mic. 6:8 and Matt. 22:37-40 along with the Ten Commandments as helpful summaries of the law.)

- **How does “Love your neighbor as yourself” fulfill the commands of God's law?**
- **How might this command reflect the whole purpose of law in a community or nation?**
- **How would life be different if everyone obeyed this command?**

Talk briefly about the changes we'd see in our world if everyone followed this command. We'd have freedom from war, crime, fear, family feuds, abuse, disrespect, and much more. Hopefully your group will see afresh how God's command to love, if followed perfectly, would make the world a better place to live.

Again, however, even followers of Christ, who have the Holy Spirit living in them, are influenced by their sinful nature and prone to forget this central law.

- **In today’s culture, what might it mean to bite and devour each other?**

“Biting” and “devouring” are strong words, evoking pictures of wild animals tearing each other apart. Paul is warning that if we ignore our new freedom to show love and we keep on living by our old sinful nature, we’ll eventually tear each other down and destroy the good relationships God wants us to have with each other.

2. Galatians 5:16-18

- What choice do we have in our new freedom in Christ?*

Paul’s advice here shows that there’s a power struggle going on in the believer’s life. The old sinful nature and the Spirit of God “are in conflict with each other.” But our new freedom involves choosing, in God’s strength, to “live by the Spirit.”

- **What does Paul mean, then, when he says, “You do not do what you want” (Gal. 5:17)?**

Paul’s comments in Romans 7:15-25 help us understand what he means here. In Romans 7:18 Paul explains, “I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out” because of “my sinful nature.” In 7:19-25 he explains further:

What I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. . . . For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

It can be reassuring to know that Paul struggled with that old sinful nature just as the rest of us do. But in God’s strength “through Jesus Christ” Paul refused to let the old nature gain control over him, and he advises that we do the same, that we “live by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16).

- **What do you think it means to “live by the Spirit”?**

Refer back to the guideline given earlier: “serve one another in love” (Gal. 5:13). Note also that we’ll pick up this topic again when we look at Galatians 5:22-26—and in more detail throughout the rest of this study of the fruit of the Spirit.

- **Who is the Spirit?**

You may want to mention briefly that God reveals himself in Scripture as three persons in one being: Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit. Now that Jesus has died for our sins, conquered death, and ascended to heaven to rule at the Father's right hand, the Holy Spirit comes to live in our hearts to guide us and shape us to become like Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 1:3-23).

- **What does this tell us about the Spirit's nature and character?**

The Holy Spirit shares the nature and character of the Father and the Son. So "living by the Spirit" means following the leading of God's Spirit to develop God's character within us.

b. What's the result of being led by the Spirit?

Paul says, "If you are led by the Spirit, you are no longer under law." In this statement Paul is not saying that God's law is no longer important or that it no longer applies to believers in Christ. If we are believers, we are led by God's Spirit, who guides us in living God's way (in line with God's law), as Jesus did. So we still look to God's law for guidance, but we are freed from the curse of the law and the supervision of the law—its former ability to point out our sins and stand in judgment over us, condemning us before God. As Paul explains in Galatians 3:11-14, 23-26:

Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." . . . Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. . . . He redeemed us . . . so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. . . . Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

- **If we're no longer "under the law," why do we still struggle to live in line with God's law?**

Reassure group members that God understands our struggle. God knows that even when we want to live by the law, we are unable to obey it perfectly. We are not yet made perfect (Phil. 3:12-14). But the good news for us all, because of Jesus, is that God no longer judges believers by the law; instead, God gives us the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the very best teacher and guide, and there is no longer any threat of punishment.

3. *Galatians 5:19-21*

a. *What qualities describe the acts of the sinful nature?*

The description of sins in these verses is graphic, and you may find it helpful to note how these actions conflict with the teachings of God's law (as in the Ten Commandments).

- **Do people still act this way today? Explain.**

You may want to take along yesterday's newspaper and point out articles that describe crime, family squabbles, greed, immorality, addictions, acts of selfish ambition, and other sins described in these verses as a visual testimony to the sinful nature that still permeates human society today.

- **What quality is lacking in a person who indulges the sinful nature?**

Talk about the lack of love and respect for God and others that permeates the sinful nature and its actions.

- **How does this picture relate to Galatians 5:15?**

b. *What's the end result of living by the sinful nature?*

Paul warns, "Those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God" (5:21).

- **What is the kingdom of God?**

Help group members see that the kingdom of God is found wherever God is honored and served as the highest authority. In this kingdom God's desires and commands have precedence over any other rules or desires. Again, love is the main characteristic of the kingdom of God, because love is the essence of God's nature (see 1 John 4:7-21).

- **Why are some people unable to enter the kingdom of God? What would have to happen before they could enter?**

People who reject God's offer of forgiveness and life through Jesus will continue to follow the way of sin and eventually die under the curse of sin, losing forever the opportunity to inherit everlasting life in God's kingdom. If they have a complete change of heart and surrender to God's will before dying, however, they may still be forgiven and be blessed with everlasting life (see Luke 23:39-43). So one important thing we can do is keep praying for their salvation before it's too late.

4. *Galatians 5:22-26*

a. *What qualities describe the fruit of the Spirit?*

Ask group members to list and reflect on the qualities mentioned in verses 22-23.

- **Is this a “to do” list or a “to be” list? Explain.**

Help everyone see that although these qualities can be expressed through a person’s words or actions, they are basic, essential qualities of a person’s inner nature, or character. If these qualities describe *what we are*, then *what we do* will flow naturally, in God’s strength, from the character of God growing in us.

- **What do these qualities reveal about God’s character?**

It will be helpful for group members—especially newcomers—to see that the list of qualities known as the “fruit of the Spirit” is a description of the very character of God. This insight leads to the heart of our study: *The fruit of the Spirit is the character of God being built in the believer.* The Spirit’s fruit reveals the transformation that takes place as our old sinful nature becomes replaced by the character of God in us. Don’t expect all group members to see this truth yet, but pray that they may learn it in the weeks ahead.

b. *Why do you think the word “fruit” is used here?*

Look closely at the word “fruit” as a thematic picture for the character of God growing in us. Talk about the delicious, healthful taste of fruit that you love, perhaps recalling your earlier discussion about favorite fruit (see Optional Share Question at the beginning of this lesson).

- **How might this picture of delicious, wholesome nourishment be appropriate for the qualities that come from the Spirit of God?**
- **Why would there never be a law “against such things”?**

It’s also important to note that the word for “fruit” in the original Greek text of Paul’s letter is singular, not plural. In other words, this fruit is one, not many. The fruit of the Spirit is one fruit with many interrelated qualities or characteristics.

- **How does this way of looking at the fruit of the Spirit make sense?**
- **In what way do all of these qualities hang together?**

If people have trouble seeing that all these things are qualities of the same fruit, ask a few questions like these: *Is it possible for an unkind person to be filled with joy? Can a person who lacks self-control have peace?*

Discuss how these qualities interact with and build on each other. Some Bible commentaries suggest that the first quality mentioned—love—is actually the fruit of the Spirit and that all the other items listed are merely different facets of love.

- **What does the word “crucify” suggest in relation to our ongoing struggle with sinful desires?**

Again, the fruit of the Spirit does not grow in believers’ lives without a struggle. Paul is saying that in God’s strength we must put sinful desires to death, choosing instead the life of the Spirit. “Crucify” is a strong word that Paul sometimes uses to remind us of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross in connection with our need to “put off [our] old self . . . and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:22-24). Paul puts it this way in Romans 6:6-7:

We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

There will be pain and struggle in giving up the old ways, the desires that still pull at us. But something good awaits all “who belong to Christ Jesus”: the kingdom of God!

c. *What might be involved in keeping in step with the Spirit?*

- **Have you ever tried to keep in step with someone who was walking quickly and with purpose?**

Talk about the need to keep your eyes on such a person, to know where that person is headed, in order to keep in step with him or her.

- **How does this help us understand Paul’s advice here?**
- **What will conceit, envy, and provocation do to knock people out of step with the Spirit?**

5. *John 15:1-8*

- a. *In the picture Jesus uses to describe his relationship with believers, how does the fruit grow?*

As you talk about this passage, encourage group members to visualize the picture Jesus describes. The scene would have been familiar to Jesus' listeners: a gardener searches throughout the rows of a vineyard to prune away dead branches. And to stimulate more fruit production, the gardener cuts back vines that are overgrown and producing mostly leaves instead of fruit.

- **In Jesus' parable, who is the gardener? Who is the vine? Who are the branches?**

Explore briefly the relationship Jesus pictures here between the Father, himself, and his followers.

- **How close is this relationship?**
- **What does this tell us about how close the believer is to Jesus?**

b. What's the one condition needed to bear fruit?

- **What must a branch do to produce fruit?**

Help group members see that the believer will bear spiritual fruit only by remaining closely connected to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

- **Think about Jesus' words "Remain in me" (John 15:4). How does this command compare with Paul's advice to "keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25)?**

Jesus' command here urges us to stay with him as our only hope, just as Paul teaches that our only hope for living by the Spirit is to stay in step with the Spirit. This is good news. When Jesus says, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 5:5), he is stating his authority as God and Savior, and he is declaring that we are not expected to produce spiritual fruit by our own efforts. Through the Spirit of God who comes to live in us and transform us when we have faith in Jesus, we can remain connected to Jesus and bear fruit in his power.

- **What is the believer's responsibility, according to this passage?**

Help group members see that Jesus is calling people into a close relationship with him—one that will produce radical changes in their character and life, to God's glory (see John 15:8). This call goes far deeper than having a "to do" list; it's about having a relationship of love and trust, of obedience and service, saturated with prayer "in the Spirit on all occasions" (Eph. 6:10; see John 15:7). As we grow in this relationship, the

fruit of the Spirit will become more and more evident in our transforming character. We will begin to look like our Lord! (See 2 Cor. 3:17-18 and consider reading this passage aloud as a way to close your discussion for this lesson.)

Question for Reflection

Reflect privately on how Jesus is causing the fruit of the Spirit to grow in you. Is there any area in which your life is less fruitful than it should be? Talk with God about that, asking the Spirit of Jesus to guide you in truth and to change you as needed (see John 14:15-21; 16:5-15).

Discover Your Bible Series

Discover
**THE FRUIT
OF THE SPIRIT**



STUDY GUIDE

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**THE FRUIT
OF THE SPIRIT**



by
Edith Bajema


**FAITH
ALIVE.**
Christian Resources

Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Cover photo: Getty One

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ISBN 1-59255-207-2

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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How to Study

The questions in this study booklet will help you discover for yourself what the Bible says. This is inductive Bible study—in which you will discover the message for yourself.

Questions are the key to inductive Bible study. Through questions you search for the writers' thoughts and ideas. The questions in this booklet are designed to help you in your quest for answers. You can and should ask your own questions too. The Bible comes alive with meaning for many people as they discover the exciting truths it contains. Our hope and prayer is that this booklet will help the Bible come alive for you.

The questions in this study are designed to be used with the New International Version of the Bible, but other translations can also be used.

Step 1. Read each Bible passage several times. Allow the ideas to sink in. Think about their meaning. Ask questions about the passage.

Step 2. Answer the questions, drawing your answers from the passage. Remember that the purpose of the study is to discover what the Bible says. Write your answers in your own words. If you use Bible study aids such as commentaries or Bible handbooks, do so only after completing your own personal study.

Step 3. Apply the Bible's message to your own life. Ask,

- What is this passage saying to me?
- How does it challenge me? Comfort me? Encourage me?
- Is there a promise I should claim? A warning I should heed?
- For what can I give thanks?

If you sense God speaking to you in some way, respond to God in a personal prayer.

Step 4. Share your thoughts with someone else if possible. This will be easiest if you are part of a Bible study group that meets regularly to share discoveries and discuss questions. If you would like to learn of a study group in your area or if you would like more information on how to start a small group Bible study,

- write to Discover Your Bible at

2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560

or

P.O. Box 5070
STN LCD 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8

- call toll-free 1-888-644-0814, e-mail smallgroups@crcna.org, or visit www.SmallGroupMinistries.org (for training advice and general information)
- call toll-free 1-800-333-8300 or visit www.FaithAliveResources.org (to order materials)

Introduction

Everyone wants a fruitful life. No one wants to be like a dry, withered branch that gets cut off and thrown away. People want to be productive, vibrant, enjoying a life filled with purpose and meaning.

The Scriptures tell us the secret to the fruitful life. It's a purpose-filled life that brings blessing to others. It's a life filled with qualities that draw others—qualities like love and gentleness, peace and goodness, kindness and self-control.

But we can't produce the fruitful life on our own. We are like branches on a vine, depending wholly on the vine to supply the life flowing through us, making it possible for fruit to grow. And that life-giving vine is Jesus.

The secret to the fruitful life is in our relationship with Jesus. Our closeness to him—or our lack of it—will directly affect how well we bear fruit for him in our lives. And our openness to his Spirit's work in us—or our lack of it—will directly affect how fully our Lord's character forms within us. That character, reflecting the inner nature of God, is the fruit of the Spirit growing in us.

And what fruit it is! Nothing can compare to the beauty of this fruit that displays the very character of God:

- love that doesn't quit, that keeps giving when others have given up
- joy that fills the heart even in the most desperate circumstances
- peace that surpasses our ability to understand
- patience that endures, trusting in God's wisdom and timing
- compassionate kindness for others in their weakness
- genuine goodness that reveals the holiness of God
- faithfulness that stands firm and even grows stronger through testing (temptation) and fierce trial
- gentle strength that makes even the weakest and most insecure feel loved and safe
- self-control so disciplined that it guides us to do what is right

If you're looking for this kind of fruit in your life, this study based on Galatians 5:22-23 and other Scriptures is meant for you. Discover how the fruit of the Spirit can grow in you so that you can live the fruitful, free life God intends for us all.

Glossary of Terms

Abraham (also called Abram)—the father of the Israelite nation, called by God to leave his homeland and follow in faith to the land God promised to show him (Gen. 11:26-25:10). He is called “the father of all who believe” (Rom. 4:11; see Gal. 3:29).

apostle—one who is sent to bring the good news message of Jesus Christ as Savior. This term is usually used to refer only to those who were witnesses of the resurrected Jesus (1 Cor. 15:3-11).

atonement sacrifice—refers to *atonement*, which means “to cover over”; a sacrifice that made amends for wrongdoing (Lev. 16). By dying in our place to pay the penalty for sin, Jesus was the “atonement sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 2:2; 4:10).

blaspheme—to scoff at or revile the name of God.

Counselor—see **Holy Spirit**

cross—a torturous instrument of execution used by the Roman Empire in the days of the early church. Jesus was crucified on a cross made from a wooden crossbeam positioned on a pole with space above his head to hang a sign that read, “THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS” (Luke 23:38).

eternal life—the state of being forgiven and receiving new life as a child of God. This new life begins when one receives Christ by faith as Savior and Lord (2 Cor. 5:17). Having eternal life does not mean believers will not suffer physical death, but they will enjoy fellowship forever with God in this life and after death—and completely when their souls reunite with their resurrected bodies after Jesus returns and they live with God in the new heaven and new earth (1 Pet. 1:3-9; Rev. 21:1-4).

faith—“being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Heb. 11:1). True faith consists of accepting as true all that God has revealed in the Bible and being confident that all one’s sins are forgiven through Christ’s **atonement sacrifice**.

fear (of the Lord)—respectful awe of God’s power and holiness, combined with love for God and obedience to God’s will.

grace—God’s kindness, undeserved favor, and forgiving love, won for believers through Christ’s death in their place.

Holy Spirit—The Holy Spirit is God, just as God the Father and God the Son (Jesus Christ) are God. They are three persons in one being. Now that Jesus has died for our sins, conquered death, and ascended to heaven to rule at the Father’s right hand, the Holy Spirit comes to live in our hearts to guide us and shape us to become like Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 1:3-23). God’s Spirit, whom Jesus calls “the Counselor” in John 14:16, supplies us

with the mind, heart, and power of God to produce in us the character of God, described in Galatians 5:22-23 as the fruit of the Spirit.

holy—set apart in a special way to bring glory to God; refers to being (declared) perfect in purity, goodness, righteousness.

hope—in combination with faith this means looking ahead in solid trust to the fulfillment of all God's promises (see Heb. 11:1).

humility—the state of humbling oneself to serve God in obedience and gratitude in response to God's salvation in Christ (see Phil. 2:1-13).

Isaac—son of Abraham and father of Jacob; Isaac was the son whom God promised to Abraham and Sarah in their old age.

Jacob—the son of Isaac who wrestled with God and was renamed Israel (Gen. 32:28); his twelve sons became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen. 49:1-28).

justified—declared righteous (right with God) through faith in Jesus Christ, who met the law's just demands by becoming the **atonement sacrifice** for our sins.

law—God's standard for holy living, summarized in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:6-21) and in various other passages (see Mic. 6:8; Matt. 22:37-40).

mercy—this term is often used to describe showing kindness to someone in distress. To be more precise, it refers to showing leniency by holding back punishment even if justice calls for it.

Noah—builder of the ark that saved his family and all kinds of land animals from the worldwide punishment of sin in the Great Flood (Gen. 6-9).

prophecy, prophet—message or messenger sent by God to speak to God's people; this gift or role sometimes includes foretelling future events that God wants people to know about.

righteous, righteousness—being right with God, perfectly conformed to God's will and free from any guilt or sin. God regards believers as righteous through faith in Christ as our one Savior from sin. Righteousness relates to goodness as a quality of the fruit of the Spirit because it means doing what is right and good in all situations, as Jesus did.

salvation—freedom from death and from punishment for sin. God gives salvation to all who repent and confess their sins and believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Sarah—wife of Abraham, mother of Isaac. She was far past childbearing age when she gave birth to Isaac, the child promised to her and Abraham (Gen. 18:1-15; 21:1-7).

sin offering—an offering made to atone for sin (Lev. 16); see **atonement sacrifice**.

sinful nature—the polluted, destructive nature we are born with because of human sin. The sinful nature enslaves us to be disobedient and rebellious toward God, and the only way to be rid of it is to put it to death by the power of the Holy Spirit living in us.

sons of God, sonship—being a son of God or having sonship refers to being a child of God (whether we are male or female) and thus enjoying the privilege of inheriting the salvation bought for us by our Lord, Savior, and Brother, Jesus, the Son of God. In biblical times (and in some cultures still today) only sons received a portion of the family inheritance.

tongues (speaking in tongues)—a gift of the Spirit in which a person speaks languages she or he has not learned before. The apostles spoke in various known tongues on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all believers (Acts 2:1-11), and other believers have spoken in “tongues of angels” (1 Cor. 13:1). The Bible cautions that the gift of tongues may be used in worship only if someone is available to interpret “for the strengthening of the church” (1 Cor. 14:26-28).

transgression—sin; refers to crossing over a line or boundary set by God for obedience.

Lesson 1

Galatians 5:13-26; John 15:1-8

The Fruit of Freedom

Introductory Notes

Our first lesson in this study deals with freedom—freedom from the control of our sinful nature, and freedom to grow in God’s nature. If we yield to the Spirit’s work in our lives, we’ll see fruit that we never dreamed possible: God’s own character growing within us.

It’s important to see that this growth is an ongoing process. Fruit does not grow overnight. The fruit of the Spirit develops from God’s cultivation and pruning in our lives and from our remaining close (in God’s strength) to Jesus and his Word.

This process also involves struggle. The original sinful nature we are born with does not die completely when we come to faith in Christ. It is still alive and kicking. Our old habits, old ways of thinking, old desires—all these can frustrate the growth of fruit in our lives.

But let’s not lose sight of the freedom and hope we have in Christ. Jesus has made it possible for us to bear the fruit of God’s Spirit, and Jesus himself is “the vine” who supplies all we need as his “branches” to flourish and bear fruit (John 15:5).

This first lesson is full of encouragement from the Scriptures: Christ has freed us from slavery to sin so that we can live by God’s law not as legalists but as Jesus’ faithful followers. And in Christ we have the Holy Spirit living in us so that we can bear God’s character and likeness—something the law could never do for us! (See Gal. 2:15-4:7.) If we remain close to Jesus Christ, spiritual fruit will grow naturally in our lives because of his presence and influence.

1. *Galatians 5:13-15*

- a. What key concept in verse 13 describes the believer?

4. Galatians 5:22-26

- a. What qualities describe the fruit of the Spirit?

- b. Why do you think the word “fruit” is used here?

- c. What might be involved in keeping in step with the Spirit?

5. John 15:1-8

- a. In the picture Jesus uses to describe his relationship with believers, how does the fruit grow?

- b. What’s the one condition needed to bear fruit?

Question for Reflection

Reflect privately on how Jesus is causing the fruit of the Spirit to grow in you. Is there any area in which your life is less fruitful than it should be? Talk with God about that, asking the Spirit of Jesus to guide you in truth and to change you as needed (see John 14:15-21; 16:5-15).