

The Fruit of the Spirit

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: We don't grow good fruit by trying harder. God's Spirit grows it in us as we walk in the Spirit.

Bible passage: Galatians 5:13–26. Read it before class.

Memory verse: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." *Galatians 5:22–23 (KJV)*

You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), paper and a pencil for each child, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.

Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: Which Tree? (5–10 minutes)

Name a fruit or nut, and kids race to call out the tree or plant it came from: an apple (apple tree), an acorn (oak tree), a lemon (lemon tree), a pinecone (pine tree), grapes (grapevine), a coconut (palm tree). Then ask: *Could you ever pick figs from a thornbush?* Read **Luke 6:44**: "For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes." Ask: *If someone watched you all week, what "fruit" would they see in your life?* Say: "Today Paul tells us what fruit God's Spirit grows."

2. Bible teaching: The Fruit of the Spirit (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Galatians. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Who wrote this, and why. Look up Galatians 1:1–2. Paul, an **apostle** (someone Jesus sent to preach), wrote this letter to the churches of Galatia. Paul had preached the gospel to them at the first (4:13), and they welcomed him "as an angel of God" (4:14). But then some people troubled them and tried to change the gospel of Christ (1:6–7). They taught that people must keep the law of Moses to be right with God. Paul answered: we are made right with God "by the faith of Jesus Christ," not by the works of the law (2:16).

Free to love. Look up Galatians 5:13. Christ made them free (5:1). But Paul says freedom is not an **occasion to the flesh**, an excuse to do whatever our selfish side wants. Instead, "by love serve one another." All the law is fulfilled in one word: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (5:14). But some of them were doing the opposite. **Look up Galatians 5:15. Bite and devour** means tearing each other apart with mean words and fights, and **consumed** means destroyed.

Two ways that pull against each other. Look up Galatians 5:16. To **walk in the Spirit** means to let God's Spirit lead how we live, step by step. The Spirit is the **Holy Ghost**, God's own Spirit. "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24), and there is "one Spirit" and "One God" (Ephesians 4:4–6). **The flesh** means our selfish, sinful side. The flesh and the Spirit are **contrary**, which means they pull in opposite directions (5:17).



Works of the flesh. Paul lists what the selfish side produces. Some of them are hatred, **variance** (arguing), **emulations** (jealous competing), **wrath** (angry outbursts), **strife** (fighting) and **envyings** (being jealous of what others have) (5:19–21). Paul says those who keep living that way will not inherit the kingdom of God (5:21).

The fruit of the Spirit. Look up Galatians 5:22–23. Make a list on the board as kids read: love, joy, peace, **longsuffering** (patience, waiting without getting upset), gentleness, goodness, faith (trusting God and being faithful), **meekness** (being humble and gentle) and **temperance** (self-control). **Against such there is no law** means no rule is against these things. Works are things we *do*. Fruit is something that *grows*. A tree doesn't strain to make apples; it bears fruit because it is alive. The Bible says "fruit," not "fruits": God wants all of it to grow in us together.

Living it out. Look up Galatians 5:24. People who belong to Christ have **crucified the flesh**: they put their old selfish way of living to death. **Look up Galatians 5:25.** If the Spirit gives us life, we should walk in step with Him. Paul ends with three don'ts: don't be **desirous of vain glory** (wanting to show off), don't be **provoking** one another (picking on each other), and don't be **envying** one another (5:26).

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Paul says freedom isn't an excuse to do whatever we want (5:13). What does it look like to use your freedom to serve someone?
2. Why do you think Paul compared these things to fruit and not to a list of rules?
3. What does "biting and devouring" one another look like at school, online or at home (5:15)? What would serving by love look like instead?
4. Which part of the fruit is hardest for you right now? Why?
5. Walking in the Spirit is step by step (5:16, 5:25). What is one step you could take this week?

Recall questions

1. Who did Paul write this letter to? (*The churches of Galatia, Galatians 1:2*)
2. In what one word is all the law fulfilled? (*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, 5:14*)
3. What does temperance mean? (*Self-control, 5:23*)

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **longsuffering** means patience, **meekness** means being humble and gentle, **temperance** means self-control, and **against such there is no law** means no rule is against these good things. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.



5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "We can't grow this fruit by trying harder. It is the fruit of the Spirit. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). That is what Paul means by crucifying the flesh (Galatians 5:24). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5). Then we walk in the Spirit, and He grows His fruit in us."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: pick one part of the fruit. Each day, write down a time God grew it in you, or a time you needed it.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Pairs share one Bible. Read a reference and a question; the first pair to read the answer aloud wins a point.

1. Galatians 1:1: What was Paul? (*An apostle*)
2. Galatians 4:13: What did Paul preach to the Galatians at the first? (*The gospel*)
3. Galatians 5:1: What did Christ make us? (*Free; "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free"*)
4. Galatians 5:13: How should we serve one another? (*By love*)
5. Galatians 5:16: What should we walk in? (*The Spirit*)
6. Galatians 5:22: What is the first fruit of the Spirit? (*Love*)
7. Galatians 5:23: What is the last fruit on the list? (*Temperance, which means self-control*)
8. Galatians 6:9: What should we not be weary of doing? (*Well doing, doing good*)

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. We can't grow good fruit on our own. Fill us with Your Spirit and grow love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance in us. Help us walk in the Spirit and serve one another by love. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks, "I keep losing my temper. Am I a bad Christian?": answer gently. Fruit grows over time. When we sin, we confess it to God and He forgives us (1 John 1:9). Paul says, "let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). Keep walking with God, and He keeps growing His fruit.

