

The Fruit of the Spirit

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Rules can't change a heart. When we walk in the Spirit, God grows real love, joy and peace in us, and it shows in how we treat people.

Bible passage: Galatians 5:13–26. Students read it out loud themselves.

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)* and "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." *Galatians 5:25 (KJV)*

You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.

Before class: read Galatians 1:1–9 and Galatians 5. Write both memory verses on the board. Draw two columns on the board: "A rule can make me do this" and "Only God can grow this in me." Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a verse or two each.

1. Opening game: Rule or Fruit? (5–10 minutes)

Read each item. Students point left for "A rule can make me do this" or right for "Only God can grow this in me," then you write it in a column. 1) Not hitting your brother. 2) Actually loving your brother. 3) Saying "sorry" because you were told to. 4) Really forgiving someone. 5) Sitting still in church. 6) Having peace inside when things go wrong. 7) Not taking the last cookie. 8) Being glad when your friend gets the thing you wanted. Ask: *What is the difference between the two columns?* Say: "A rule can change what you do on the outside. Paul wrote about what only God's Spirit can grow on the inside."

2. Bible teaching: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Tell the setting in your own words: Paul, an apostle, wrote this letter to the churches of Galatia (Galatians 1:1–2). He had preached the gospel to them at the first, while he was sick or weak in his body (4:13), and they welcomed him "as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus" (4:14). But after he left, some people troubled them and tried to pervert, or twist, the gospel of Christ (1:6–7). They taught that believers had to keep the law of Moses to be justified, made right with God. Paul wrote that "a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (2:16). Now, in chapter 5, he shows what a free life in Christ looks like.

Read out loud: Galatians 5:13–18. Old words in this passage:

- **brethren** (5:13): brothers and sisters in the Lord; **liberty**: freedom
- **an occasion to the flesh** (5:13): an excuse to do what our selfish, sinful side wants
- **bite and devour . . . consumed** (5:15): tear each other apart with words and fights, until you are destroyed
- **lust of the flesh** (5:16): the wrong desires of our selfish side; **contrary** (5:17): opposite
- **led of the Spirit** (5:18): led by God's Spirit, the Holy Ghost



Tell 5:19–21 in your own words: Paul lists the "works of the flesh," what a life run by selfish desire produces. Among them are hatred, **variance** (arguing), **emulations** (jealous rivalry), **wrath** (angry outbursts), **strife** (fighting), **seditions** (splitting into sides), **envyings**, and other sins. He warns that "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (5:21).

Read out loud: Galatians 5:22–26. Old words in this passage:

- **longsuffering** (5:22): patience that holds on a long time without getting bitter
- **faith** (5:22): trusting God and being faithful, someone others can count on
- **meekness** (5:23): humble and gentle strength; **temperance**: self-control
- **against such there is no law** (5:23): no law forbids these; nobody makes a rule against love
- **crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts** (5:24): put to death the old selfish life and its wrong desires
- **desirous of vain glory** (5:26): wanting to look important; **provoking**: stirring each other up; **envying**: being jealous

Who is the Spirit? The Spirit is the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the one God. "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24), and Paul says there is "one Spirit" and "One God and Father of all" (Ephesians 4:4–6). When God fills us with the Holy Ghost, it is God Himself living in us and growing His fruit.

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Paul says freedom in Christ is not an excuse for the flesh (5:13). Where do people your age use "I'm free" as an excuse? What does using freedom to serve look like?
2. Verse 15 talks about biting and devouring one another. Where do you see that happen in group chats, at school or even at church? How does it "consume" people?
3. Works are made; fruit grows (5:19, 5:22). Why does it matter that this is fruit of the Spirit and not a to-do list?
4. "Against such there is no law" (5:23). Why can't a rule make someone love, have joy or be patient?
5. Verse 24 says those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh. What does it look like to say no to your selfish side every day?
6. Verse 25 says if we live in the Spirit, we should also walk in the Spirit. What is one area where you need to start walking in step with God?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Read both verses together. In pairs, one student says Galatians 5:22–23 while the other counts the nine parts of the fruit on their fingers; then switch. Then cover one phrase at a time on the board and quiz each other. Say Galatians 5:22–23 this week; keep working on Galatians 5:25 next week too.



5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Paul says the people who belong to Christ 'have crucified the flesh' (Galatians 5:24). That is what happens in the gospel. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: '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) We **repent**, turning from sin, and 'our old man is crucified with him' (Romans 6:6, KJV). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water.

Remission means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5). Then we live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, and He grows His fruit in us."

Pray with the students, 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.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Which work of the flesh shows up in me most: arguing, jealousy, anger or something else (5:19–21)?
2. Which part of the fruit of the Spirit would replace it? What would that look like this week, at home and at school?
3. Write a short prayer asking God to fill you with His Spirit and grow that fruit in you.

If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: when you feel the pull to bite back at someone (5:15), stop and ask God for the fruit you need right then: longsuffering, gentleness, temperance or love.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for setting us free through Jesus. We can't change our hearts with rules. Fill us with Your Spirit and grow Your fruit in us: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. Help us live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, and serve one another by love. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks, "If I still get angry or jealous, does that mean I'm not saved?": answer honestly and gently. Fruit grows over time, and walking in the Spirit is a daily choice (5:16, 5:25). When we sin, we confess it, and God is faithful to forgive (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). Encourage them to keep praying and to talk with their pastor.

