

LESSON 52

The Fruit of the Spirit

GALATIANS 5:1 – 6:1



— BIBLE TRUTH —

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT MARKS THE LIVES OF CHRISTIANS

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Galatians 5:1—6:1 from the Scriptures or read story 130, “The Fruit of the Spirit,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Boasting in the Works of the Flesh

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ several packets of gold star stickers
- ✓ an adult helper

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 15 MIN

Crucify Your Sinful Desires

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ a large, brown paper cross
- ✓ index-card-size sticky notes
- ✓ pens or pencils

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 15 MIN

The Fruit of the Spirit Tree

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ brown, yellow, and red construction paper
- ✓ apple-shaped template
- ✓ scissors for each student
- ✓ tape
- ✓ markers or pens or pencils

LESSON SNAPSHOT

8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Write Out a Testimony

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper and pens or pencils

TOTAL 80 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Christ has set us free from the law to love—Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians to correct problems in that local church. After Paul first brought the gospel, men who were “false brothers” (Galatians 2:4) distorted it. They claimed that a person must be circumcised in order to be saved. In this passage, Paul reclaims the purity of the gospel by explaining that those who are believers in Christ are free from the law. It doesn’t matter whether or not you are circumcised (Galatians 5:6). In other words, God accepts us not because of anything we do but only because of what Jesus did.

Paul anticipates that our freedom in Christ might lead us to believe we can do what we want without consequence; if I am not bound by the law it is OK to sin. Paul warns against this kind of attitude when he says, “Do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh” (Galatians 5:13). We are free from the condemnation of failing to keep the law, but we should use that freedom to keep the law without fear. Jesus said the whole law could be summed up in two commands. First, to love God and then to love our brother (Matthew 22:37–40). Paul picks up on that and directs the Galatians to use their freedom as an opportunity to love one another (Galatians 5:13–14).

Christ has given us his Spirit to help us in our fight against remaining sin—After directing us to use our freedom to love, Paul recognizes that our flesh (or sinful nature) fights against God’s purpose in loving our neighbor. The desires of the flesh are in opposition to the desires of the Holy Spirit (which come to the new nature as a result of our conversion). We must fight the sinful nature because its desires seek to entice us and drag us away (James 1:14). Each day we have choices to make. The Spirit within us gives us power to overcome remaining sin inside us and live righteously for God. For every sinful temptation, we find within us the opposite holy desire. We are no longer bound to sin, but instead can put sin down and follow the way of the Spirit. So we cultivate godly desires from the Spirit and “put to death” sinful desires from the flesh. Our sinful desires are obvious, and so is the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. What a joy to know that if we “walk by the Spirit” we will battle successfully and not “gratify” the sinful desires of our flesh (Galatians 5:16).

We can help each other in our fight against sin—Although the desires of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit are obvious, we need others in our lives to help us obey. Rather than becoming prideful in our accomplishments, we are called to humbly serve those who have stumbled. We are to restore them gently and be careful so that we do not stumble ourselves (Galatians 6:1). None of us is perfect. We are all sinners and continue to sin. Therefore, none of us perfectly walks in step with the Spirit. We all have areas where we stumble, and often we are blind to those areas. We need to help each other see these areas of compromise. What is difficult for us to see is usually easy for others to see. When we restore each other humbly, in

a spirit of gentleness, bearing one another's burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ in loving our neighbor as ourselves.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Christian Freedom

Until God called us and set us free from the bondage of sin, none of us were free. Now as Christians we are set free. But what are we set free to do? We are not set free to do as we please without consequence. The true believer trades his slavery to sin and its associated guilt for slavery to Christ and its associated grace (Romans 6:22). We are free of guilt, but not free of the need to follow Christ. If we were free of that need we would not be Christians at all. So it would be wrong to say that a Christian is free to do whatever he wants since all his sins are paid for. In Galatians 5:13 Paul is clear that we should not use our freedom to gratify sinful desires. Instead of following darkness we should use our freedom in Christ to honor Christ with our bodies, living for Christ. Those who truly belong to Christ will crucify the desires of the flesh and live for him.

Where Is the Gospel? _____

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

Notice that Paul doesn't call the fruit of the Spirit the fruit of the good man. The truth is that apart from Christ, none of us is good, and the only way we can demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit is if we have been given a new nature by God through the gospel of Christ. That is why Paul says in Galatians 5:24, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

The gospel is the doorway to Christ, and he is our only help. Apart from the sacrificial death of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, all our efforts fall short, and we would at best be doing good works with mixed, self-honoring motives. The Spirit of God is the one who changes our desires from sinful to truly righteous.

A parallel text to Galatians 5 is 2 Peter 1:2-7. Peter first acknowledges that it is only by grace, through our knowledge of Christ that we can achieve godliness by his power. Yet, once we have that salvation we are called to "make every effort" to live godly lives. Then Peter gives a list that includes fruit of the Spirit. Basically Peter is saying the same thing Paul is saying. Use your freedom and power in Christ to strive to keep in step with the Spirit of God and live a godly life of love.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Galatians 5:1—6:1 from the Scriptures or read story 130, “The Fruit of the Spirit,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Boasting in the Works of the Flesh

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ several packets of gold star stickers
- ✓ an adult helper

The object of this lesson is to show how we should not boast in outward works. This illustration works with the passage in Galatians because the Galatians were being tempted to get circumcised as a work that would qualify them to be a Christian. It also works with Jeremiah 9:24–26 and 1 Corinthians 1:27–31 where we are directed to boast only in the Lord.

Have an adult helper stick the gold stars on their shirt in rows. They should reserve at least a half dozen stars to add to their shirt as you talk. Ask the helper why they have all the gold stars. They should reply that they were watching a football game where the players got stickers for good plays and they got this idea that they should put a sticker on their shirt every time they demonstrated a good Christian work.

The helper should demonstrate by helping a student boast in her activities and awarding her a gold star.

You should explain that their boasting should not be in their works. We are all saved by grace and any good works we do are also done by God’s grace. Our works can’t earn us salvation so they are nothing by themselves. Our only boast is in Jesus Christ. So you should only have one star. When people ask you what that star stands for, tell them “the gospel.” Tell them that

Jesus died for your sins. That is the only work worth boasting about, and we didn't even do it; Jesus did it for us!

Give every child in the class a gold star and review the gospel with them.

TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

OBJECT LESSON 2 15 MIN

Crucify Your Sinful Desires

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ a large, brown paper cross
- ✓ index-card-size sticky notes
- ✓ pens or pencils

Before class tape the large, paper cross up in the classroom.

Ask the class what a sinful desire is. Review the list in Galatians 5:19. Pass out sticky notes and ask the students to write down a sinful desire they have given in to. Provide a few examples, such as getting angry with a sibling or becoming jealous of the accomplishments of a friend.

Explain that if we trust in Jesus and in what he has done, we can be free from our sins. Tell them that when we say no to sins we are tempted to commit, we are putting our sinful flesh to death. In a symbolic exercise of their desire to follow Jesus, have each student take their sticky note and affix it to the cross. Then pray that God would make this exercise real in their hearts and transform their lives by the gospel so that they can really place all of their sinful desires on the cross and live according to the Spirit.

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 15 MIN

The Fruit of the Spirit Tree

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ brown, yellow, and red construction paper
- ✓ apple-shaped template
- ✓ scissors for each student
- ✓ tape
- ✓ markers or pens or pencils

Using brown construction paper for the tree and yellow and red paper for apples, have the students make a bulletin board or poster of the fruit of the Spirit for the wall of your classroom.

You can make a simple apple template they can trace and cut out. Then have the children personalize the different fruits of the Spirit on the apples, such as be kind to my brother Bill, or be gentle with my sister Mary. Assign a group to make the trunk and tree branches of the brown paper while the rest of the class prepares the fruit. Then tape the fruit onto the tree. Talk about how we all need to ask God to change our hearts so that we might demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Write Out a Testimony

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper and pens or pencils

In Galatians Paul talks about a war going on inside every Christian. The works of the flesh are at war against the fruit of the Spirit. Ask the children to write about an instance when God helped them say no to sin and demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit instead. Or about a time when they gave in to temptation. This exercise is designed to help the class examine their own lives. Tell them they may raise their hands if they need help. Remember, not all your students are going to be Christians.

Have volunteers share what they wrote. Don't force everyone to share. Encourage the children to take their work home and share it with their parents.