

# THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: GALATIANS 5:1- 6:1



*The fruit of the Spirit marks the lives of Christians.*

## The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

### Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

**Christ has set us free from the law** – 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” came in distorting the gospel by claiming that a person needed to be circumcised to be saved (see Galatians 2:3-5). In this passage Paul reclaims the purity of the gospel by explaining that those who are believers in Christ are free from the law. In other words, we are accepted by God because of what Jesus did. We cannot earn our way to God by any work we do.

Paul goes on to say that all believers are free from the bondage of trying to earn salvation, but all remain bound to love one another. Because we are saved, we are free to obey without threat of punishment. In addition, we are not to use our freedom (from the slavery of the law) to indulge the flesh (sin). Instead we are to use our freedom to live for God by loving one another.

**The works of the flesh are against the fruit of the Spirit** – In this passage Paul directs our attention to the internal war that goes on in the life of every believer. The desires of the flesh (or the old, sinful nature) 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 (see 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. Paul tells us that it is not complicated. Our sinful desires are obvious, and so is the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

**We need to 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.

None of us are 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 ourselves. 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.

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### WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

*Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in 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 are 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 sinful 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.

### ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

**Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.**

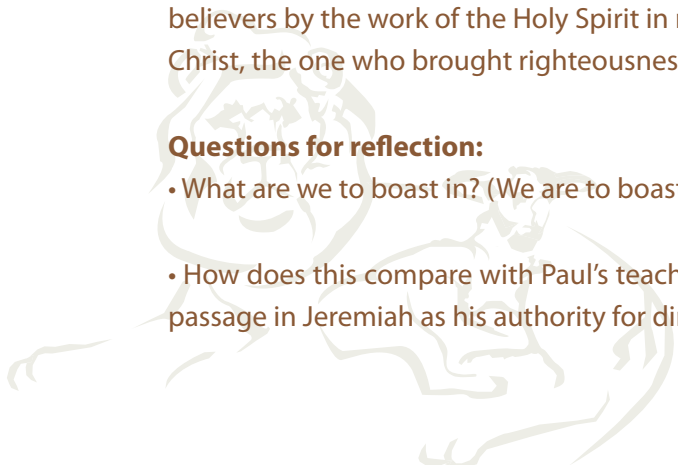
**Bible Passage: Jeremiah 9:24-26**

#### **Connecting the passage to Christ:**

Our boast can only be in knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. Jeremiah prophesied about a day when it would not be sufficient to simply be circumcised in the flesh. One would also need to be circumcised in his heart. In Romans 2:29 Paul tells us that circumcision of heart is the way true believers are marked. Physical circumcision pointed forward to the day when Jesus would die and circumcise the hearts of believers by the work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating them. This is only possible through the work of Christ, the one who brought righteousness to the earth.

#### **Questions for reflection:**

- What are we to boast in? (We are to boast that we understand and know God.)
- How does this compare with Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 1:27-31? (Paul is directly referring to the passage in Jeremiah as his authority for directing all of our boasting to what Jesus has done for us.)



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### SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

#### BE A DOER OF THE WORD

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.

### ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

#### A REAL FRUITCAKE

##### Supplies:

a basket with a handle  
filled with various fruits

Use this skit as a humorous way to introduce the Bible passage for today.

Feel free to use this skit as is or ad lib with another teacher or helper.

Sam: "Hey, Mary how is it going?" (Sam enters with a basket full of fruit.)

Mary: "Fine, Sam how are you?"

Sam: "I am doing just splendid, fine, wonderful, and couldn't be better!"

Mary: "Wow, that's pretty good. What has you feeling so wonderful?"

Sam: "I just picked up some very special fruit." (He shows the fruit to his friend.)

Mary: "That looks really tasty. But what's the big deal with carrying around the fruit?"

Sam: "This is no ordinary fruit. Take a closer look and guess what kind of fruit it is."

Mary: (Looking closer.) "Well, all I see is a bunch of bananas."

Sam: "I don't mean its name. What kind of fruit is it?"

Mary: (Confused.) "Fruit you can eat?"

Sam: "Of course you can eat it. That's not what I mean. This is my fruit of the Spirit."

Mary: (Really confused, she turns to the class and gives them a look of confusion.)  
"Your fruit of the Spirit? What do you mean?"

Sam: "Well, the other day I got into an argument with a guy at work; I said some pretty nasty things to him. He sent me an email that said I should think twice about what I said and that as a Christian I should get the fruit of the Spirit in my life. So, now I have my very own fruit of the Spirit!"



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Mary: "Sam, I think you are confused. This isn't the fruit of the Spirit, this is just fruit."

Sam: "Now wait just a minute. I went to the grocery store and asked the produce manager where he keeps the fruit of the Spirit and he pointed me to the produce section. I decided to pray about which fruit I should have in my life. I spun around three times with my eyes closed (he demonstrates), then filled my basket with the first fruit that I came to. I would offer you a piece but you need to get your own fruit of the Spirit."

Mary: "Sam, where did you get that spinning around stuff?"

Sam: "Well, how else was I going to figure out which fruit of the Spirit was for me?"

Mary: "Did you try looking in the Bible?"

Sam: "The Bible? Why look in the Bible for fruit?"

Mary: (Opening her Bible to Galatians 5:22) "Here Sam, read this."

Sam: (Sam reads the verse out loud.) "Well, so I got it a little mixed up."

Mary: "A little mixed up, why Sam you got it all wrong."

Sam: "I didn't get it all wrong. What are the third and fifth fruits listed?"

Mary: (Looking at the verse and counting out loud) "Let's see, three is peace and five is kindness."

Sam: (Smugly smiles) "You are correct. Here is a PIECE of fruit. (He gives her a banana.) That's kindness if I ever saw it myself. So there Miss Know-It-All!" And, I love and en-JOY them very much. You need PATIENCE to eat them because you have to take the skin off first. They bruise easily so you need to be GENTLE and not drop them. You buy them in bunches so you need SELF-CONTROL not to eat them all. And, last I heard, there was NO LAW AGAINST eating bananas! (Sam walks out of the room and the skit ends.)



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### BOASTING IN THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

**Supplies:**

several packets of gold  
star stickers

The object of this lesson is to show how we should not boast in outward works.

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 then demonstrate by helping one of the students boast in what they did and award themselves a gold star.

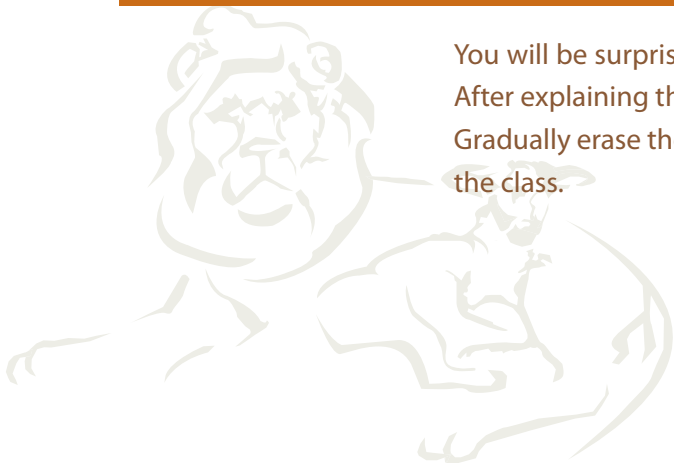
You should explain to them that their boasting should not be in their works. We are all saved by grace and any good works we do are also done by God's grace. Our works can't earn us salvation so they are nothing by themselves. Our only boast is in Jesus Christ. So, you should only have one star. When 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.

This illustration works with the passage in Galatians as the Galatians were being tempted to get circumcised as a work that would qualify them to be a Christian. It also works with the "On the Road to Emmaus" scriptures Jeremiah 9:24-26 and 1 Corinthians 1:27-31 where we are directed to boast only in the Lord.

### MEMORIZE GALATIANS 5:19-23

You will be surprised to see just how quickly the class can memorize this passage. After explaining the passage, write it up on the board and go over it with the class. Gradually erase the different fruits of the Spirit. You will end up memorizing it with the class.



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### CRUCIFY YOUR SINFUL DESIRES

**Supplies:**

- a large brown paper cross
- enough index cards for the whole class
- clear tape

Draw out the class and ask them what a sinful desire is. Review the list in Galatians 6:19. Pass out index cards to the class. Ask the students to write down a sinful desire they gave in to. Give them a few examples, such as getting angry with their brother or becoming jealous of the accomplishments of a friend.

Explain to them that if we trust in Jesus and what He has done, we can be free from our sins. Tell them that when we say “no” to sins we want 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 card and tape it to the cross. Then pray for the class 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.

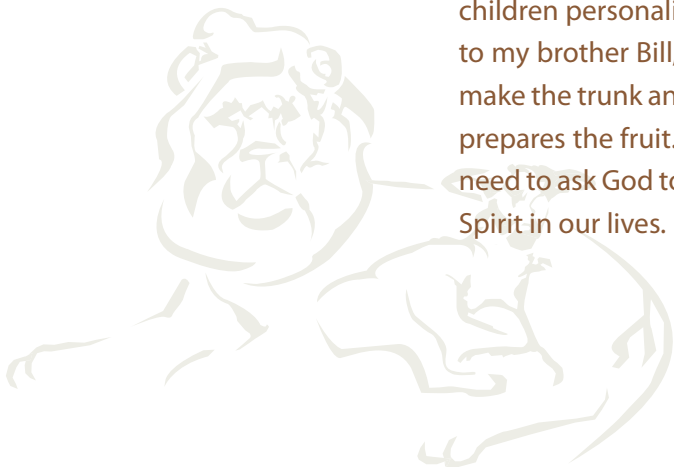
## PRAYER

**Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.**

## IN CLASS PROJECT

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 of children to make the trunk and tree branches out of the brown paper while the rest of the class prepares the fruit. Then tape or staple the fruit on 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.



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### FOR THE OLDER GRADES

#### WRITE OUT A TESTIMONY

**Supplies:**

paper and pencil

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 a testimony where God helped them say “no” to sin and demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit instead (or a time when they didn’t have the strength and gave in to their temptation). This exercise is designed to help them 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 yet.

Ask for volunteers with a testimony of how the Spirit of God helped them to share. Don’t force everyone to share and don’t ask for folks to share who gave in to their temptation. Encourage the children to take their work home and share it with their parents.

### A LITTLE BIT MORE

**Christian Freedom** – Until God called us and set us free from the bondage of sin, none of us were free. So now as Christians we are set free. But what are we set free to? 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 (see 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. Paul objected to this line of thinking. 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.

