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The Fruit-filled Story

Lesson One

1. Scan over **Genesis 1-3**, thinking about the ideas of fruit and fruitfulness. Make some observations.

- For what purpose were plants given to mankind?
- What was mankind's responsibility toward Eden?
- When Adam and Eve took what they were not allowed to take, what did this mean for them and for Eden?

2. Read **Genesis 1.28 (see also 9.1; 17.6; 48.4); Exodus 1.1-7; Jeremiah 23.1-6**. Think about the theme of being fruitful and multiplying throughout the history of God's people.

- If Adam and Eve had never sinned, what would being fruitful and multiplying have meant for mankind?
- To what end did God want Abraham's family to multiply?

3. Read **Deuteronomy 26.1-15**. How were the Israelites to view the fruit of their labor?

4. Read **Isaiah 5.1-7**. Given what the Lord provided for his people, what did he expect of them?

5. What does it look like for people to bear fruit? Read **Luke 3.7-14; Matthew 7.16-20; 12.33-37**.

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The Fruit-filled Story

(continued)

6. Read **Mark 11.12-14** and **11.20-21** (see also Luke 13.6-9).

- Now read **11.1-11**. How was Jerusalem like a lush, green fig tree?
- Now read **11.15-19**. How was Jerusalem like a fig tree without figs?

7. Read **Matthew 21.33-46**. What was God going to do about the unfruitfulness produced by Jerusalem's leaders?

8. Read **Isaiah 32.12-18**. How would Israel be rejuvenated?

9. Read **John 15.1-11**. What happens if fruit is not borne? How do disciples bear fruit?

10. Read **Revelation 22.1-5**. How will the end be like the beginning?



A Miniature Study of Galatians

Lesson Two

1. Read through Galatians, jotting down some of the main points and main themes that stand out to you.

2. Share a verse or paragraph that epitomizes this letter for you.

3. Note any big ideas or even specific wordings throughout the letter which connect to the section about the fruit of the spirit (included below, so you can mark it up like crazy).

- Galatians 5.16-26 (ESV) -

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

4. Think about ways that Paul's teaching in various sections of Galatians helps us to produce the fruit of the Spirit.



Love

Lesson Three

A word on word studies

Words have meaning in context. When we write and speak, we expect others to recognize our words, and then understand the particular ways in which we are using them.

A dictionary is a tool. Dictionaries summarize the way (or ways) in which a word is used.

Typically, a dictionary lists multiple meanings for a given word. When I look up a word in a dictionary, it tells me possible meanings for the word I'm studying. I have to use discernment as to which way it is being used in context.

The NT was written in an ancient Greek dialect. This means that, while it may help me a little to look up a word in a dictionary for English words, what is most helpful is a dictionary about Greek words.

You can see for yourself how a word is used. With a concordance (or a digital word-search), you can see the ways in which a given word is used in that same book, or by that same author, or elsewhere in the NT, or in the whole Bible.

1. When did God begin to love us? How do we know God's love?
2. Read **Deuteronomy 6.4-9**. Why is this command so foundational?
3. Why might love be first on the list? Read **Galatians 5.13-15**.
4. Read **Leviticus 19.13-18, 33-34**. What kinds of commands precede the command to "love your neighbor as yourself"? Does this help us understand biblical love? Explain.
5. Why is it important to connect our love to Christ's love? Read **2Corinthians 5.14-15; Ephesians 5.1-2; 1John 3.16-18**.
6. Ask God what ways you ought to bear the fruit of Christ-like love in your life.



Joy

Lesson Four

1. What kinds of things do people typically see as a cause for joy?
2. Why did Jesus rejoice in **John 11.15**? Did Jesus' gladness mean he did not experience grief? Explain.
3. What did joy have to do with Jesus' crucifixion? Read **Hebrews 12.1-3**.
4. What did this look like for the apostles in **Acts 5.40-42**? Also consider the context of Paul's joy in **Philippians 1.18**.
5. What should this look like for us? **Hebrews 12.3-4; Matthew 5.11-12**.
6. On what is Christian joy based? What are causes for joy for Christians?
7. What is the benefit of enduring unhappy circumstances? **James 2.1-4; Hebrews 12.11**.
8. Prayerfully consider ways that the fruit of joy ought to be borne in your life. Have you had negative circumstances in recent times which, from a gospel perspective, can be a cause for grief as well as joy?



Peace

Lesson Five

1. What does peace mean to you?
2. Why isn't there perfect peace in the world?
3. Describe the ultimate picture of God's kingdom as seen in **Isaiah 2.2-4**.
4. This is a little technical. Give it some thought, even if it doesn't immediately seem relevant. Read **Leviticus 7.11-15**. In the Temple sacrificial system, who was responsible for bringing sacrifices? What was done with the meat of this peace offering? Why do you think it is called a "peace offering"?
5. Read **Ephesians 2.11-22**. How do we obtain peace? Also, are there other descriptions here that help you define peace?
6. Why is peace particularly needed for the churches in Galatia? See **Galatians 5.15, 26**.
7. Prayerfully consider how walking by the Spirit should produce peace through your life.



Longsuffering (patience)

Lesson Six

1. What can we learn from God in the Old Testament about longsuffering (or slowness to anger)? Read **Exodus 34.6-7; Nehemiah 9.16-21**.

2. How is our own temperament affected by the way we perceive God's temperament? Read **James 1.19-20**.

3. How do we keep from lashing out in anger against those who harm us? Read **Jeremiah 15.15-21; Proverbs 20.22**.

4. What can we learn, from the context of **Galatians 5**, about the need for this among the Christians to whom Paul was writing?

5. Reflect on this topic in the proverbs (quotations are from the ESV).

Proverbs 14.29 - Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.

15.18 - A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.

16.32 - Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

19.11 - Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

25.15 - With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone.

6. Prayerfully consider ways longsuffering ought to be shown in your life.



Kindness

Lesson Seven

- Ephesians 4.30-32 (ESV) -

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

1. For a sense of God's kindness, read **Psalm 31**.
2. Share an example in Scripture of someone exhibiting kindness.
3. Read **Romans 11.17-24** or **Ephesians 2.1-10** or **Titus 3.1-7**. Consider God's kindness toward us and how it affects a change in us.
4. In **Romans 2.1-4**, what is the warning for those who are not changed by God's kindness?
5. Read **Luke 6.32-36**. How does Jesus' teaching help us to do good in situations where we do not naturally want to?
6. In light of ways God has shown you kindness, how have you fallen short in showing kindness? How can you repent and grow in this?



Goodness

Lesson Eight

1. For a sense of God's goodness, read **Psalm 25**.
2. What examples come to mind of someone reflecting God's goodness?
3. Read **Ephesians 5.6-10**. How should we determine what is good? What should we do in regard to darkness?
4. Read **2Thessalonians 1.11-12**. Whereas new Christians may hold on to old ways of thinking and living, what is Paul's prayer for these new Christians?
5. What are the wealthier Christians taught in **1Timothy 6.17-19**?
6. Prayerfully consider ways such goodness ought to be exhibited in your life.



Faithfulness

Lesson Nine

1. There is some ambiguity about this term. Here are two ways it may be understood.

a) Being someone whom others can trust.

b) Being someone who trusts in God.

In the way things work out practically, do you see how both ideas are closely connected?

2. Read **Exodus 34.1-10**. What does Moses have in his hands during this event? What did these represent? What was God's promise to Moses and Israel? What does the declaration of God's character have to do with all of this?

3. Read **2Timothy 2.11-13**. What does it mean that God is faithful even when we are not?

4. Read **Genesis 15.1-6**. What did Abraham do with the result that he was considered righteous?

5. In **Romans 3.21-26**, how does Paul summarize the right response to God's gift?

6. Do you have any imperfect fruit in your life? Do you lack any good fruit in your life? If so, does God accept you? How?

7. How does your trust in God affect the ability of others to rely on you?



Meekness (gentleness)

Lesson Ten

1. Share an example in Scripture of someone exhibiting meekness.
2. It often seems that the loudest, angriest, most ambitious people get what they want, which then tempts us to use that same approach in advancing the interests of God's kingdom. How does **Psalm 37** help us avoid this?
3. How powerful is Jesus? How will he yield this power on the last day? Now read **Matthew 11.28-30**. Can someone be gentle and powerful at the same time?
4. Read **Matthew 21.5** or **Luke 9.51-55** or **1Peter 2.21-25**. How do these passages show Jesus' meekness?
5. Apparently, in **2Corinthians 10.1-6**, how did some apparently regard Paul? How does Paul explain his approach? In actuality, what did they prefer from Paul, as seen in **1Corinthians 4.19-21**?
6. Consider the following for practical instructions on bearing the fruit of meekness.

Correcting a fellow Christian - **Galatians 6.1**

Evangelists correcting fellow Christians - **2Timothy 2.24-26**

Receiving teaching from Scripture - **James 1.21**

Answering an abrasive or abusive skeptic - **1Peter 3.14-16**



Self-control

Lesson Eleven

1. What kinds of connotations does the concept of self-control have in the world? How did Felix take it in **Acts 24.25**?
2. Share an example from Scripture which exemplifies self-control (or perhaps its opposite).
3. Read **Galatians 5.24 (see also 2.20)**. How is self-control at the center of Christian faith?
4. We might think of self-control strictly in terms of restraint (i.e. what we keep ourselves from doing), but how might we adjust our thinking so as to include a more positive concept? Read **1Corinthians 9.24-27**.
5. Here are some areas where self-control is specifically taught. Share any observations.
 - In order to make sacrifices for others - **1Corinthians 9.25 (and the context)**
 - Overcoming sexual temptation - **1Corinthians 7.1-9**.
 - For shepherding a congregation - **Titus 1.7-9**.
6. Prayerfully consider ways self-control ought to be exhibited in your life.

Finally, in striving to bear fruit, always remember that the fruit is not simply our own but that of the one who gives us the Spirit, the one with whom we have been crucified. In this life, our fruit will be far from perfect, but a faithful walk, by God's grace, bears good fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. So walk by the Spirit.