

The Fruit of the Spirit **Galatians 5:16-26**

Ice Breaker

Option 1

Spend a few minutes—preferably with a partner or two—catching up on your growth as a disciple this past week. How did you do with your personal action steps from last week? Which step did you choose? Meet with someone from the group? What worked? What are you learning? What kept you from taking steps?

Option 2

Do you have a “green thumb”? Are you good at growing plants, flowers, gardening, etc.? Do you struggle? What has been helpful for you? Why have you struggled?

Option 3

As a general pattern, do you tend to be more motivated by the hope for rewards or the fear of punishment? Why?

Understanding the Text

Read Galatians 5:16-26 and respond to the following questions.

1. What is the conflict that Paul is describing?
2. What does “flesh” mean here?
3. What stands out to you about Paul’s list of the “works of the flesh”? How might you put them in categories?
4. What warning does Paul give? What does he mean? What does he not mean?
5. What does Paul mean by the “Spirit”?
6. What stands out to you about the list of fruit?
7. What does the fruit metaphor reveal about the nature of spiritual growth? (Tim Keller says that growth is gradual, inevitable, internal, and symmetrical.)

Processing and Applying the Gospel

Take a look at the “Fruit of the Spirit” chart on the next page and do some self-examination. Share with a partner or two your responses to the following:

1. What are some of your natural gifts and strengths that fit the definitions of the specific fruit?
2. Where have you seen genuine spiritual growth? Have you ever confused natural gifting with real growth? What is the difference?
3. Where have you seen “counterfeit fruit” in your life?
4. What are the idols that need recognized and dismantled in your life? How might the group be able to help you in this process?

Personal Prayer, Reflection, and Action Step

Commit to take one or more of the following steps.

1. Read Galatians 5:16-26 each day this week. Review the chart and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you areas where He is leading you to grow.
2. Meet with someone from the group this week to help each other process your response to the chart.
3. Schedule a half-day personal retreat to allow more time for the Holy Spirit to work. Leave your phone and computer behind. Bring a copy of this chart, your Bible, and a journal. Read through and pray Psalm 139 to start your time. Work through the four steps at the end of the chart to guide your time. Meet with someone from your group to share what you learned and how God worked in you.

Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26)
Adapted from Tim Keller's *Galatians for You*

Fruit	Definition	Opposite	Counterfeit
Love	To serve a person for their good and intrinsic value, not for what you can get in return	Fear, self-protection, and abusing people	Selfish affection, where you are attracted to someone because of how they make you feel about yourself
Joy	A delight in God for the sheer beauty and worth of who He is	Hopelessness and despair	Elation based on experienced blessings, not the Blessor
Peace	Confidence in the rest and control of God, rather than your own	Anxiety and worry	Indifference and apathy, not caring about someone
Patience	An ability to face trouble without blowing up	Resentment toward God and others	Cynicism or lack of care—this is too small to care about
Kindness	Ability to serve others in a way that makes me feel vulnerable, which comes from deep inner security	Envy, unable to rejoice in other's joy	Manipulative good deeds (transactional <i>hesed</i>); doing good for others to look good for others or God
Goodness	Integrity; being the same person in every situation	Phony, hypocrite	Being truthful without being loving; getting things off your chest to make yourself feel or look better
Faithfulness	Loyalty, courage, to be utterly reliable and true to your word	Opportunist, friend only in good times	Being loving without being truthful, so that you are never willing to confront or challenge
Gentleness	Humility, self-forgetfulness	Superior or self-absorbed	Inferiority
Self-Control	Ability to pursue the important over the urgent	Impulsive, uncontrolled	Willpower based on pride, the need to feel in control

Steps to Growth

- 1. Recognize your need for growth.** Stop looking at your natural strengths and gifts as signs of your Christlikeness. Challenge yourself to look at the definitions, opposites, and counterfeits to see how the fruit is connected. What are your underlying attitudes of self-centeredness that are at war with the Spirit?
- 2. Remember that you belong to Christ.** Ask the Spirit to remind you that you are a child of God. Our approval and welcome from the Father does not come from our performance, character, or actions; but on His! We are free, then, to acknowledge where our desires have led us away from the Spirit, where we have confused our gifts and talents with true growth.
- 3. Remove your idols.** The process of “crucifying the sinful nature” requires us to examine our sin at the motivational, not just behavioral level. Ask yourself the question *Why? Why must you have what you are desiring? Lord, my heart thinks I must have this thing, otherwise I have no value. But to think and feel this way is to forget that I am a child of God. By the power of your Spirit, help me to see your love for me so clearly that this thing that I am no*

“worshipping” is no longer attractive to me. Paul is not saying, just say “no” to sin. He is not saying just be hard on yourself and your body.

4. **Replace your idols with Christ.** Worship Christ. Read the Bible. Pray. Do the things that fill your mind with the Truth of God and his character. Focus on building His Kingdom. Don't wait for God to “zap” you and change your feelings instantly. This is an active process of “keeping in step with the Spirit.”