



# Fruit of the Spirit Bible Studies

Studies: 1-7

Watch the following video from the Bible Project for an overview of the letter to the Galatians.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmx4UjRFp0M>

## Introduction to Galatians & Fruit of the Spirit Studies

The book of Galatians is a passionate plea by Paul to the church in Galatia to not to drift from the Gospel. False teachers (Judaizers) insisted that the Christians followed the Jewish Law *in addition* to placing their faith in Jesus. They claimed this was necessary to be saved.

Paul's letter quickly reveals his shock at what's happening in the Galatian church. He argues for the legitimacy of the Gospel he had already taught them (1:10-2:14), pointing to the source of the Gospel (Jesus himself) (1:10-24); and the Gospel's endorsement by the Apostles in Jerusalem (2:1-14).

Paul makes his argument through various contrasts, that merge into each other:

- a) Faith and 'works of the Law' (2:15- 3:15)
- b) Promise and Law (3:15-3:29)
- c) Freedom and Slavery (4:1-5:15)
- d) Spirit and Flesh (5:16-26)

From Galatians 'the True Gospel' is the merging of Faith, Promise, Freedom and Spirit. The 'False Gospel' is a merging of: Works, Law, Slavery and Flesh.

The first two studies unpack the contrasts to set the foundation for growing the 'fruit of the Spirit'.

## Study 1: Living by the Law vs Living by the Spirit

### Talk About

A meritocracy is a system where people advance because of their talent, effort, and achievement, rather than their wealth or social class. What have been some of your experiences of merit or meritocracy in your life and how did this impact you?

### Scripture

Paul wrote this letter to the Galatians to correct a problem that was spreading through the church. Some believed that to be a follower of Jesus, you also had to follow the Jewish law. In this study we'll explore Galatians 2:15-3:14 where Paul explains why living by the law is incompatible with the gospel.

### Observation

#### Read Galatians 2:15-21

1. What do you personally think it means when we say someone is "justified"?

Note: The biblical term "justified" is a legal term which means "declared innocent" or "not-guilty".

2. Paul explains there is one way that will **never** lead one to be "justified". How would you describe this one way?



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Note: "Legalism is any attempt to gain acceptance or forgiveness from God through our own works or merits".

3. According to this passage, what is the **ONLY** way that any one will ever be 'justified' before God?
4. If we believe we can be made right with God through the law, what happens to the grace of God in our lives and what does that mean for the sacrifice Jesus made? (v21).

### Read Galatians 3:1-9

5. In verses 2-5, Paul asks the following rhetorical questions (See below). Discuss each of the following. What is the answer Paul is expecting and why?
  - Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?
  - Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?
  - Does he who supplies the Spirit to you do so by works of the law or by hearing with faith?
6. In verses 6-9, Paul uses the example of Abraham to illustrate that righteousness does not come by works of the law. What led God to declare that Abraham was righteous? Who are the true children of Abraham? Why do you think this is important?

### Read Galatians 3:10-14

7. In verses 10-12, Paul explains that it's not possible to rely on/live by the law and live by faith simultaneously. In your own words, why are these two ways of living incompatible with each other?
8. Through Jesus death, He accomplished two amazing things for us:
  - a) Redeemed us from a curse. Describe the curse Jesus rescued us from.
  - b) Made a way for us to receive a blessing. Compare this blessing/promise to the curse.

What does this reveal to you?

### Apply

9. What are some ways you've noticed 'legalism' seep into your life or community? Where do you think it comes from?
10. What are steps you can take to cooperate with the Spirit to drive out legalism and live by faith?

### Prayer

Ask the Spirit to reveal any legalism in your life, if things are revealed, confess them to God and ask for His freedom.

Pray for your life group/discipleship group and also for our congregation, that the Spirit will transform us and set us free from all legalism, and lead us into life.



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## Study 2: Flesh Vs Spirit (Gal 5:16-26)

### Talk about

Share your best/worst gardening (growing plants) story.

What do you think leads to successful gardening?

### Introduction

Up to this point, Paul argues in this letter that we are saved (justified) by faith (our response) based on the promises of God (God's gift), represented by the Gospel of Jesus. We are not saved by 'works of the Law' (our response) based on the Mosaic Law (God's gift), represented by circumcision.

The natural question then is: "If being a Christian means being free from the legal and moral obligations set out in the mosaic law, how should we live? How do we be 'holy'? Won't this freedom from law mean that we become even more sinful?"

This study of Gal 5 seeks to address these questions. By 'walking by the Spirit', a believer is able to grow in holiness and at the same time, avoid legalism.

**Scripture: Read Gal 5:16-26**

### Observation

1. What words/phrases/ideas/concepts are repeated throughout the passage?
2. Which phrases are commands/instructions?
3. What do you think is the main contrast in this passage? (Locate the "But").
4. What images or metaphors does Paul use?

### Interpretation

5. What do you think is the main command of the whole passage? (v16, v25)
6. What outcome is:
  - a. Avoided by obeying the main command (v16, v19-21)?
  - b. Promised from obeying this main command? (v16, v22-23)
7. The fruit of the Spirit is a sample description of what 'walking by the Spirit' will result in. It is not a "to do" list to legalistically follow. What comes to mind when you think about 'fruit' and 'growing fruit' and how does this encourage us in our 'pursuit of holiness' without us falling into legalism?



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8. What encouragement do you get knowing that:
  - a. The phrase “and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” is not a command, but a result (promise) of ‘walking in the Spirit’ (v16);
  - b. The Spirit restrains the desires of the flesh (v17)
  - c. The ‘flesh crucified’ is something that has happened in the past (v24); and
  - d. Paul assumes the Galatians are already ‘living by the Spirit’ (ie. made alive by the Spirit, given life by the Spirit (cf. Gal 3:2-5), when he encourages them to ‘keep in step with the Spirit’.
  
9. What comes to mind when you think about ‘walking by/with someone’, and ‘keeping in step with someone’? How does this encourage us in our holiness?

### Application:

10. What are some practical ways that you personally want to commit to in response to the encouragement to ‘walk in the Spirit’ and ‘keep in step with the Spirit’?

### Prayer:

Thank God for the Holy Spirit who:

- Restrains the desires of the flesh in our struggle against sin;
- Promises that ‘we will not gratify the desires of the flesh’ and will produce the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ in our lives – as we walk in the Spirit, and keep in step with Him.

Ask the Spirit to help you live out your commitment to ‘walk in the Spirit’.



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### Study 3: The Fruit of the Spirit- Love & Joy

#### Talk About

Share about someone in your life who best expresses the fruit of love.  
What makes them different to other people in your life?

#### Scripture

Paul was concerned that some in the Corinthian church had become self-centred and self-absorbed to the point that they were arrogant about their spiritual gifts and forming in-groups. In 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:8 Paul explains that the way of love is so critical and describes what this love looks like.

#### Observation

##### LOVE- Read 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:8

1. At the end of Chapter 12, Paul says: "I will show you a still more excellent way". What do you think Paul means by this?
2. In 13:1-3, Paul describes three different scenarios, and how meaningless any of these things are without love. How would you describe each scenario, and what is his conclusion if love is absent?
3. Paul begins to describe what love is, what love is not, and what love does (v4-7).
  - a. Highlight the words that describe what this **love looks like**. Which of these stands out to you?
  - b. Highlight the words that describe what love **does not do**. Do any of these grab your attention?
  - c. What do you think it means that love: bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things?
4. How does this description of love align with Jesus life and example?  
Do any particular gospel stories come to mind for you?
5. What is the significant difference between love and spiritual gifts (v8)?

#### Talk About

Share about a time in your life where you experienced great joy. What made that so joyful for you?

#### Observation

##### JOY- Read James 1:2-8

6. According to James, what situations should we consider as an opportunity for joy, and why (v2-3)?



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7. What is the end result of perseverance working in us, and what do you think it means to let it “finish its work” in us (v4)?
  
8. What do you think is the connection between wisdom, perseverance and joy and how do we receive it (v5-8)?

### Apply

From the passage above, how do you desire biblical love to grow in your life, and what is one step you can take to cooperate with God to grow it in your life?

Similarly, how does the encouragement from James inspire you to grow biblical joy in your life, and how might you work with God to see a harvest of joy?

### Prayer

Pray for one another with your life group/discipleship group for God's love and joy to overflow our lives and our congregation.



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### Study 4: The Fruit of the Spirit- Peace & Patience

#### Talk about

Describe a person in your life who most displays the peace of God. What makes them stand out?  
How would you describe your experience of peace in your life right now?

#### Introduction

Writing from prison to the Philippian church, Paul continually points to Jesus as our source of joy and our model for life and godliness. In chapter 4, Paul reveals powerful truths about the peace of God and how to experience it in our lives individually and in community. May His peace rest on you!

#### Scripture: Read Phil 4:4-9

#### Observation

1. Paul twice encourages the Philippians to rejoice “in the Lord” at all times (v4). He quickly follows this up with the encouragement to “Let your gentleness be evident to all...” (v5). Gentleness is also translated as ‘graciousness’ or ‘reasonableness’. What do you think is the connection between “rejoicing”, “gentleness” and “peace”?
2. There are times when we might become anxious, but instead of feeding that anxiety, Paul encourages us with some very practical steps towards peace. Describe each of those steps in detail (v6). Why do you think every step is important?
3. According to verse 7, the result of our prayers is that we encounter the peace of God. How does Paul describe this peace and what does this peace do to us?
4. What we meditate on can significantly impact our peace, which is why Paul encourages the Philippians to meditate on certain kinds of things. What things come to mind that match these descriptions (v8)? What things come to mind that are the opposite?
5. As we imitate Paul in these ways, what promise can we eagerly anticipate (v9)?

#### Talk About

Share a time in your life that has required the most patience. What helped you through this?

#### Observation

#### PATIENCE- Read James 5:7-11

6. James encourages his readers to be patient in the face of the suffering that they are enduring. He encourages them to be patient like a farmer. What aspects of the farmer’s example are we to learn from, and what should be our focus and hope as we wait (v7-8)?



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7. Sometimes others can test our patience especially when we are under pressure and pain. What instruction does James give to us about those situations and what should be our motivation (v9)?
8. The prophets are the next example for us to follow in being patient. What do we learn from their example? What hope can we have in following them (v10-11. See Mt 5:11-12 & 1 Pet 3:14; 4:14)?
9. Job is the third example we have of perseverance. What quality are we to imitate in Job and what qualities of God can give assurance to us in our trials and troubles (11)?

### Apply

Personally, why do you feel you need God's peace in your life right now? Based on the above passage, what step might you take together with God to grow the fruit of peace in you?

What impact will more patience have in your life and to those around you? How are you encouraged by James' teaching to make a commitment with God to grow patience in your life?

### Prayer:

Invite the Holy Spirit to fill the gathering of your life group/discipleship group. Pray with one another for specific situations that need the peace and patience of God to break through. Pray that this fruit might grow in our lives.





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### Study 5: The Fruit of the Spirit- Kindness & Goodness

#### Talk about

How would you define kindness? Share a story of when you were the recipient of it.

#### Introduction

The good news was transforming the island of Crete and God's strategy for this was through the transformed lives of His people. Paul wrote this letter to describe how the gospel transforms our relationships, revealing the transformed Christian citizen (Ch 3). Here we will learn about kindness!

#### Scripture: Read Titus 3:1-11

#### Observation

1. Paul describes some qualities of how the transformed believer lives, and what they avoid (v1-2). Highlight each quality and discuss which behaviours grab your attention.
2. What stands out to you in the way the qualities (v1-2) are contrasted with our previous way of life (v3)? Take a moment to reflect on/describe your way of life before encountering Jesus.
3. Paul describes the amazing source of our transformation (v4-7). This begins with the revealing/appearing of God's kindness and love. How did God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit express that kindness and love to us?
4. How is this wonderful work of God in us meant to impact our daily lives in what we should do (v8) and what we should avoid (v9-11)?
5. In summary, how then should the kindness of God enable and empower our kindness to others?

#### Talk About

"The ideals which have always shone before me and filled me with the joy of living are goodness, beauty, and truth."- Albert Einstein. What impact has the goodness of others had on your life?

#### Observation

#### GOODNESS- Read 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

6. Having seen their faith and love grow, Paul prays for the Thessalonians even more. What three things does he specifically pray for in verse 11?
7. The word for goodness (Agathosune) means "the active quality that constantly seeks what is right and beneficial for others". What part do we and God both play in growing goodness in our lives?



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8. What is Paul's motivation for praying that God helps our goodness become a reality (v10, v12)? How does this inspire and encourage you to grow in goodness?
  
9. Based on the above, what is absolutely essential in growing goodness in our lives?

### Apply

Who most needs to encounter the kindness and goodness of God through your life right now?

From the passages today, what step will you take together with God so that kindness and goodness might flourish even more in your life?

### Prayer:

Invite the Spirit to fill the gathering of your life group/discipleship group. Pray for people who need the kindness and goodness of God. Pray for each other that this fruit might grow in us.



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### Study 6: The Fruit of the Spirit- Gentleness & Faithfulness

#### Talk About

Share about how gentleness was viewed or expressed in your experience (family, school or workplace or culture).

#### Scripture

During the time of James leadership in the early Church, there were some expressions of zealous Christian faith that unfortunately lacked the crucial fruit of gentleness. This portion of the letter helps us understand the how important gentleness is in the life of a Christian and how to grow it.

#### Observation

##### **GENTLENESS- Read James 3:13-18**

1. According to James, what is the mark of true wisdom and understanding? What is the role that meekness (Gentleness/Humility) plays in connection with wisdom?
2. James begins to paint a picture of what he calls “earthly wisdom” in v14-16. What are the two main ingredients of this “wisdom” (v14, 16) and how would you define them?
3. What is the nature of this “earthly wisdom” (v15) and what does it result in (v16)?
4. An expanded picture of “heavenly wisdom” is painted in v17,
  - a. List each of the qualities and reflect on what they mean.
  - b. What does this heavenly wisdom lead to and how do we grow it?
  - c. Why do you think gentleness is so crucial in this picture of heavenly wisdom?
5. How does this description of gentleness align with Jesus life and example? Do any particular gospel stories come to mind for you?

#### Talk About

Think of someone who matches the quality of faithfulness (This could be a fictional or historical figure, or someone you know personally). Why do they stand out to you?



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### Observation

#### **FAITHFULNESS- Read Matthew 25:14-30**

6. What stands out to you about the start of the parable (v14-15)? How is this similar to what God does with us?
7. What qualities do you notice of the servants who were entrusted with the 5 talents and the 2 talents (v16-17)? How did the master interpret what they had done (v21-22) and what is their reward?

Note: A talent was a weight of measurement of gold or silver of approximately 75 pounds (34 kg). It was a very significant amount of money.

8. What did the “one talent” servant do with his resource and why (v18, 24-25)? How was this behaviour interpreted by the master and what was the end result (v26-30)?
9. What response is Jesus looking for from us as we hear this parable today?

### Apply

In which areas or relationships might God be prompting you to grow in gentleness with His help? Take a step in this direction.

What would growing faithfulness look like in your life in responding to the parable of the talents?

### Prayer

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you grow in gentleness and faithfulness as you surrender your willingness to Him. If specific situations come to mind, pray for these together, that breakthrough might come.



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### Study 7: The Fruit of the Spirit- Self Control

#### Talk about

Share your thoughts on the following quote:

“The ability to subordinate an impulse to a value is the essence of the proactive person.”  
- Stephen R. Covey, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

#### Introduction

As the good news was transforming the island of Crete, Paul was teaching how the gospel transforms our behaviour in contrast to the behaviour of false teachers who were roaming about. One quality that stands out significantly is the quality of ‘self-control’.

#### Scripture: Read Titus 2:11-15

#### Observation

1. In this passage, Paul describes what the “Grace of God” has done. What does Paul mean when he writes that “the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people”?
2. The grace of God saves us, and at the same time, it trains us. Unpack the different words Paul uses to describe the way God’s grace trains us (v12)?
3. How is the theme of “self-control” repeated in Paul’s encouragement to the various groups in the Cretan Christian community (v2-10)?
4. What role do you think the anticipation of Jesus’ return plays in this “grace-training” process of growing “self-control” in us (v13)?
5. Verse 14 gives more insight into why Jesus sacrificed so much for us. What is the three-fold end result that Jesus has in mind for us when He redeems us?

#### Apply

How might you lean into this “Grace-Training” process that the Spirit is working in you? What areas of self-control would you love to see God help to grow in your life? Commit these to prayer and take a step of faith.



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### Reflecting on the fruit of the Spirit.

As you reflect on this journey of learning more about the fruit of the Spirit, what are some insights or common themes that you've noticed? What are some changes you've experienced in your life? Share your thoughts with others in your group.

### Summary

The first two studies focused on the tensions we face when we attempt to live by Spirit.

Firstly, we must overcome the tendency to live by the law ("Legalism is any attempt to gain acceptance or forgiveness from God through our own works or merits").

Secondly, we must overcome the tendency to live by the flesh (That part of our nature which leans towards satisfying our sinful desires).

It is by continuing to live by the Spirit, walk by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit, that we are able to overcome legalism and license (The law and our flesh).

In studies 3-7, we looked at each of the expressions of the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22. These are a result of the Holy Spirit working in us as we cooperate with Him. The fruit is not a result of the Spirit's work without our involvement, and they are not a result of our efforts without God's help.

As we continue this journey of spiritual transformation, it is important for us to avoid two extremes:

1. Assuming that this transformation is solely God's activity and we have no part to play;
2. Living as if it all depends on our efforts without depending on the Spirit's help and power.

God welcomes us into a beautiful partnership of transformation that renews us, renews our relationships and by God's grace, begins to renew the world in which we live. May this partnership become a growing dynamic reality for you and for me as we wait for His glorious return! Amen.

### Prayer:

Invite the Holy Spirit to fill the gathering of your life group/discipleship group. Pray with one another for the fruit of the Spirit to grow in your lives. Pray the fruit will grow in your homes, workplaces and in the church by the power of His Spirit.