

Family Devotional – Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22-23

For personal use only, written by Alicia Bennett @MobilizerMom

Age range: preschool through elementary depending on their attention span

Materials Needed:

- Blank paper
- Colored pencils
- Bible

Background: Set the stage by explaining who the author of the book of Galatians is.

Say: “Paul was someone who went to school to study the Old Testament (point to that section of the Bible). Paul would’ve memorized much of the Old Testament: the Law of Moses, the Psalms of David, the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah. He didn’t meet Jesus before Jesus was killed on the cross, but Paul learned about Jesus later and became a Christ-follower. He went on to become a missionary and taught many non-Jewish people about what Jesus taught in the Gospels (the NT books of Matthew, Mark, Luke & John) and the God of the entire Bible. The book of Galatians (one of the books now part of the New Testament) is written by Paul as a letter to the church in Galatia to help them understand that to be a Christian they didn’t have to follow all the laws of the OT but simply had to trust in Jesus as their Messiah and abide in Him.”

Transition to today’s passage:

Say: “In Galatians 5, Paul explains that when we abide in Jesus, we will see proof of this from the FRUIT that we see in our lives. To explain this concept, Paul uses some Old Testament metaphor as a picture of how this spiritual fruit is produced in our lives. If we ourselves were a tree. Let’s read it first all together (have those who can read follow along in their Bibles)”

Read Galatians 5:22-23 from your Bible.

Activity: Give each child a piece of paper and some colored pencils and explain that they are to draw as you explain this metaphor to them.

Say: “I am going to explain what Paul was saying using a metaphor, or a word picture. You will draw the part of the picture as I tell you to.”

Say: “Paul would’ve known the beautiful words of David from Psalm 1, also referenced by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 17: “Blessed is the man who...delight[s] in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither.” (Psalm 1:1-3)”

Ask: “As you draw roots at the bottom of your page, tell me what purpose do roots have on a tree?” (allow children to offer their own ideas)

Say: "Roots draw up nutrients from the soil and provide water to the tree. They grow wide and deep in order to reach all the nutrients and water. The deeper the roots grow, the more access to the nutrients and water the tree needs to stay alive. When we are firmly rooted in God's Word as Psalm 1 suggests, we are blessed: we will stay strong and healthy, we are not shaken by droughts or storms (aka bad stuff that can happen to us), we yield fruit in the right season and do not die."

Say: "As a tree grows up from the roots, the trunk must be strong in order to support the rest of the tree above it."

Ask: "As you draw the trunk of the tree, tell me where does the trunk get its strength?" (allow children to offer up their ideas)

Say: "Ephesians 3:16 says 'According to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being...' God wants us to get strength from Him. Throughout the Psalms, the psalmists refer to God as their strength, their refuge, their might fortress. We get our strength from the Lord just as the trunk of a tree gets strength from being firmly rooted in God's Word. The trunk of the tree also serves as the passageway of nutrients and water from the roots to the branches of the tree. Just as we, as the 'body of Christ' (Ephesians 4:12) are to serve one another in ministry, meet together regularly, pray together often, and sing and worship together in order to strengthen the whole body (Colossian 3:16-18)."

Say: "The next part of the tree that grows up from the trunk are the branches. As you draw your branches on your tree, let me tell you what Jesus said about branches in John 15. Jesus said, 'I am the vine, you are the branches [talking to his followers]. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.' (ref John 15:5) Jesus asks us to 'abide' in Him."

Ask: "Do you know what 'abide' means?" (let children offer up their own ideas)

Say: "It means to stay close, draw near, cling to, learn from Jesus! In fact, Jesus says we can not bear good fruit unless we abide in Him! And if we do not abide in Him, He said, 'If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into a fire, and burned.' (John 15:6) Draw a broken branch falling off your tree for someone who doesn't 'abide' in Jesus.

Ask: "Now, other than nutrients that the roots are gathering from the soil, what other things do trees need to grow up big and strong?" (let children offer up their own ideas)

Say: "Sunlight and water! Draw a big sun and a rain cloud above your branches."

Ask: "Did you know that Jesus called Himself the 'light of the world' (John 9:5) and 'living water' (John 4:10-14)?" (let children answer)

Say: "We know that trees need sunlight to survive just as Christians we need Jesus to light our path and help us grow in our walk. We know that trees need water just as we need Jesus in order to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord."

Ask: "Back to our growing tree: what do leaves do on a tree?" (let children offer their own ideas)

Say: “Yes, leaves, like the roots are essential for a tree’s survival: they create food the tree needs to survive. Just like the leaves feed the tree, we must feed on God’s Word. Jesus said in John 6 that He is “the bread of life” (ref John 6:35): He provides the food we need to survive. Knowing the Truths about who Jesus is, and the promises He gives us will help us reflect Jesus’ love to those around us. As you draw leaves on your trees, tell me: have you ever watched the sunlight dance off the leaves of a tree, shimmering and shining like little crystals as they danced? So are our lives when we feed on the Word of God: we will reflect the “light of the world”—Jesus to the world around us.”

Say: “Now we get to the part of the tree that Paul mentions in Galatians 5: the fruit of the tree! I hope you realize by now that fruit comes from a long, and often slow, process of being firmly rooted in God, being strengthened by the Lord in regular fellowship with other believers, abiding in Christ and reminding ourselves that Jesus is “the light of the world,” “living water,” and “the bread of life,” then, and only then, do our lives produce “the fruit of the Spirit [which] is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).”

Ask: “As you draw fruit on your tree, let me ask you a question: what kind of fruit does an apple tree make? An orange tree? A pear tree?” (let children offer their own ideas)

Say: “That’s right: they can only produce a certain kind of fruit because of what kind of tree they are. Jesus spoke of this in Matthew 7 when He said, “Every health tree bears good fruit but a diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit...Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.” (ref Matthew 7:17-18,20) Therefore, the fruit that we see in our lives is not good works, but overflow from our attitudes and beliefs on the inside. A true Christian, who is abiding in Jesus and firmly rooted in God’s Word will be evident by their fruit.”

Transition to a reflection time and consider these questions to help your children reflect:

- Ask: “Is the fruit of the Spirit evident in your life? If so, which ones? If not, what fruit are you producing (remember fruit is your attitudes and beliefs not your works)?”
- Ask: “What can you do to abide more in Christ, sinking your roots more deeply into His Word and strengthen yourself so that the fruit of your life better reflects this tree?”

Pray together as a family.

Say: “God thank you for your Word changes our hearts, teaches more about your Truth, and points out where we have strayed. Help us to desire to be more like this tree described in Psalm 1 with roots planted deep into your Word. Help us to desire to look to you for our strength and fellowship closely with other believers. Help us to abide in Christ and look to Him as everything we need for life and godliness: He is our light, our living water, and our daily bread. Forgive us where we have not abided in Jesus in our lives and we ask you to prune us where we need to be pruned so that we can produce the fruit you want in our lives. Thank you that you love us! Thank you for your Word. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”