



LifeChange

A NAVPRESS BIBLE STUDY SERIES

*A life-changing
encounter with God's Word*

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

*God grows His character in us as
a living witness for a watching world.*

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NavPress 

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The Fruit of the Spirit: A Bible Study on Reflecting the Character of God

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CONTENTS

How to Use This Study	v
Introduction: The Fruit of the Spirit	ix
Session One—Love: Learning to Serve Others (Luke 10:25-37)	1
Session Two—Joy: Rejoicing in Any Situation (Philippians 1:12-26)	9
Session Three—Peace: Overcoming Anxiety (Philippians 4:4-9)	19
Session Four—Patience: The Benefits of Waiting (James 5:7-11)	27
Session Five—Kindness: Caring for One Another (Ruth 2)	35
Session Six—Goodness: Overcoming Evil with Good (Romans 12:17-21)	45
Session Seven—Faithfulness: Keeping Our Commitments (Matthew 25:14-30)	53
Session Eight—Gentleness: A Parent’s Care (1 Thessalonians 2:7-12)	63
Session Nine—Self-Control: Mastering Our Desires (1 Corinthians 9:24-10:13)	73
Notes	81

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Objectives

The topical guides in the LifeChange series of Bible studies cover important topics from the Bible. Although the LifeChange guides vary with the topics they explore, they share some common goals:

1. to help readers grasp what key passages in the Bible say about the topic;
2. to provide readers with explanatory notes, word definitions, historical background, and cross-references so that the only other reference they need is the Bible;
3. to teach readers how to let God's Word transform them into Christ's image;
4. to provide small groups with a tool that will enhance group discussion of each passage and topic; and
5. to write each session so that advance preparation for group members is strongly encouraged but not required.

Each lesson in this study is designed to take forty-five minutes to complete.

Overview and Details

The study begins with an overview of the fruit of the Spirit. The key to interpretation for each part of this study is content (what is the referenced passage *about?*), and the key to context is purpose (what is the author's *aim* for the passage as it relates to the overall topic?). Each lesson of the study explores an element of the fruit of the Spirit, with a corresponding passage from the Bible that further illuminates that part of the fruit.

Kinds of Questions

Bible study provides different lenses and perspectives through which to engage the Scripture: observe (what does the passage *say*?), interpret (what does the passage *mean*?), and apply (how does this truth *affect* my life?). Some of the “how” and “why” questions will take some creative thinking, even prayer, to answer. Some are opinion questions without clear-cut right answers; these will lend themselves to discussions and side studies.

Don't let your study become an exercise in knowledge alone. Treat the passage as God's Word, and stay in dialogue with Him as you study. Pray, “Lord, what do You want me to see here?”, “Father, why is this true?”, and “Lord, how does this apply to my life?”

It is important that you write down your answers. The act of writing clarifies your thinking and helps you to remember what you're learning.

Study Aids

Throughout the guide, there are study aids that provide background information on the passage, insights from a commentary, or word studies. These aids are included in the guide to help you interpret the Bible without needing to use other, outside resources. Still, if you're interested in exploring further, the full resources are listed in the endnotes.

Scripture Versions

Unless otherwise indicated, the Bible quotations in this guide are from the New International Version of the Bible. Other versions cited are the English Standard Version and the Christian Standard Bible.

Use any translation you like for study—or preferably more than one. Ideally you would have on hand a good, modern translation such as the New International Version, the English Standard Version, the New Living Translation, or the Christian Standard Bible. A paraphrase such as *The Message* is not accurate enough for study, but it can be helpful for comparison or devotional reading.

Memorizing and Meditating

A psalmist wrote, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). If you write down a verse or passage that challenges or encourages you and reflect on it often for a week or more, you will find it beginning to affect your motives and actions. We forget quickly what we read once; we remember what we ponder.

When you find a significant verse or passage, you might copy it onto a card to keep with you. Set aside five minutes each day just to think about what the passage might mean in your life. Recite it to yourself, exploring its meaning. Then, return

to the passage as often as you can during the day for a brief review. You will soon find it coming to mind spontaneously.

For Group Study

A group of four to ten people allows the richest discussions, but you can adapt this guide for other-sized groups. It will suit a wide range of group types, such as home Bible studies, growth groups, youth groups, and workplace Bible studies. Both new and experienced Bible students, and new and mature Christians, will benefit from the guide. You can omit or leave for later any questions you find too easy or too hard.

The guide is intended to lead a group through one lesson per meeting. This guide is formatted so you will be able to discuss each of the questions at length. Be sure to make time at each discussion for members to ask about anything they didn't understand.

Each member should prepare for a meeting by writing answers for all of the background and discussion questions to be covered. Application will be very difficult, however, without private thought and prayer.

Two reasons for studying in a group are accountability and support. When each member commits in front of the rest to seek growth in an area of life, you can pray for one another, listen jointly for God's guidance, help one another resist temptation, assure each other that each person's growth matters to you, use the group to practice spiritual principles, and so on. Pray about one another's commitments and needs at most meetings. If you wish, you can spend the first few minutes of each meeting sharing any results from applications prompted by previous lessons and discuss new applications toward the end of the meeting. Follow your time of sharing with prayer for these and other needs.

If you write down what others have shared, you are more likely to remember to pray for them during the week, ask about what they shared at the next meeting, and notice answered prayers. You might want to get a notebook for prayer requests and discussion notes.

Taking notes during discussion will help you remember to follow up on ideas, stay on the subject, and have clarity on an issue. But don't let note-taking keep you from participating.

Some best practices for groups:

1. If possible, come to the group discussion prepared. The more each group member knows about the passage and the questions being asked, the better your discussion will be.
2. Realize that the group leader will not be teaching from the passage but instead will be facilitating your discussion. Therefore, it is important for each group member to participate so that everyone can contribute to what you learn as a group.
3. Try to stick to the passage covered in the session and the specific questions in the study guide.

4. Listen attentively to the other members of the group when they are sharing their thoughts about the passage. Also, realize that most of the questions are open-ended, allowing for more than one answer.
5. Be careful not to dominate the discussion—especially if you are the leader. Allow time for everyone to share their thoughts and ideas.
6. As mentioned previously, throughout the session are study aids that provide background information on the passage, insights from a commentary, or word studies. Reading these aloud during the meeting is optional and up to the discussion leader. However, each member can refer to these insights if they found them helpful in understanding the passage.

A Note on Topical Studies

LifeChange guides offer a robust and thoughtful engagement with God's Word. The book-centric guides focus on a step-by-step walk through that particular book of the Bible. The topical studies use Scripture to help you engage more deeply with God's Word and its implications for your life.

INTRODUCTION

The Fruit of the Spirit

JESUS ONCE TOLD His disciples: “Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit” (Matthew 7:17). That’s a reality every farmer knows: a healthy tree, rooted and fed well by its source, shows its health by the good fruit it bears. But if a tree produces poor fruit—or worse, no fruit at all—something in the health of the tree or its connection to good soil and nutrition is compromised.

Jesus elaborated, “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them” (verses 18-20).

Of course, we know that Jesus was not simply talking about agriculture. In Galatians 5, the apostle Paul tells us very clearly the nature of both bad and good fruit. The bad fruit, which humanity has displayed since the very first sin, includes “sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.” Paul concludes this string of sins by saying, “I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21, *ESV*).

Good fruit, on the other hand, does not come naturally to fallen human beings and can only appear through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, who lives within every true Christian: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23, *ESV*). Jesus displayed these excellent qualities throughout His life on earth because they reflect the character of God Himself. And from the moment you received Jesus as your Savior and Lord, that “fruit” has gradually and increasingly begun to appear in your life.

In this LifeChange study guide, you will look at each element of the fruit of the Spirit one session at a time, in the order that Paul presents them. Each session will focus on one key passage of Scripture that fully describes the part of the fruit being considered. The end of each session contains suggestions for studying related passages.

Jesus desires every Christian to become more fruitful every day—neither withering away nor bearing thorns, but bearing life-giving fruit. This LifeChange study guide can encourage you to fulfill His desire so that the fruit you bear will increasingly look like His.

LOVE: LEARNING TO SERVE OTHERS

Luke 10:25-37

IN 1967 BRIAN EPSTEIN walked into the Beatles' studio and announced: "Boys, I have the most fantastic news to report. You have been selected to represent England in a television program which, for the first time ever, will be transmitted live around the world via satellite."¹ John Lennon wrote the song they decided to perform—"All You Need Is Love"—two weeks before the event. During the live broadcast, the Beatles told over 350 million viewers that they could "learn how to play the game [of love]. It's easy!"

Love as part of the fruit of the Spirit, though, is a far higher calling than the "game" the Beatles suggested. And the "expert in the law" in Luke 10 probably wouldn't agree that loving God and loving others is easy—especially after Jesus tells him the parable of the Good Samaritan!

-
1. Read Luke 10:25-37. What are your initial impressions of how this conversation unfolds?

What do you notice about the ways Jesus responds?

2. What key words or phrases jump out at you in this passage? Why?

The expert in the law would have been familiar with Daniel 12:2: "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." Likewise, Psalm 37:18 states: "The blameless spend their days under the LORD's care, and their inheritance will endure forever."

3. The "expert in the law" decides to test Jesus' knowledge of Scripture by asking, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (verse 25). Why do you think he asked this specific question?

12. How does God's description of love differ from how we might understand love?

How does this affect our understanding of what love will look like in our lives as we bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit?

Your Response

What would it look like for you to be a more loving neighbor at church, at work, and in your neighborhood?
