

Fruits of the Holy Spirit – Session 1
Introduction to the Term

Timing: 40-50 minutes, then leading into ministry

Buzz groups: Suggestions are boxed, pairs or groups of 3-4 will work best

Illustrations: Suggestions are noted, but your own ideas and stories are preferable

Focus: Major on the one or two points most relevant to your group

Icebreaker – if you were a fruit, what would you be, and why?
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Introduction

Introduce the course and why you have chosen to do it this term

Key Point: Our lives get better and better as we give our lives over to the Holy Spirit

Key Verse: “*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*” (Galatians 5: 22-23).

- Explain how you’ve seen these develop in you and / or in others
- This course is designed to encourage us to discover how to develop these and experience more of them in our lives

Buzzgroups: Pick one “fruit” – when did you last have a tangible sense of possessing this attribute?

1. God loves fruitfulness

- We’re aiming for *fruit* rather than *flowers* which although they look beautiful in the short term, don’t last long.
- Fruit helps sustain us as an essential part of our diet. Fruits – including seeds and nuts – are amazing. They’re packed with energy, vitamins, the ultimate healthy, sweet delicious foods.
- Fruits also contain seeds which naturally perpetuate more plants and fruit, which produce more fruit, which produce more fruit....
- The Bible begins with fruit trees (Genesis 1: 29 - 30) and ends with fruit trees (Revelation 22:1 – 2)
- Gods desires us to be fruitful both physically (Genesis 1:28) and spiritually (Matthew 7:16 – 20)
- Fruit was one of Jesus’ favourite metaphors
- We’re aiming for long term fruitfulness, not short term beauty... Fruit not flowers

2. Fruit is the result of growth in a healthy plant.

- Fruit will only come from a plant that is healthy. Keeping a plant healthy takes work. If a plant is struggling to survive, it’s priorities are its leaves, stems and roots, not its fruit.

- Optimum growth occurs when a plant is in an environment that is conducive to growth. I.e. adequate water, light, temperature. When these variables are correct, the plant will fulfil its role as a fruit bearing plant.

Illustration: Tell a personal funny story about gardening or looking after houseplants (or failing to!)

- In the same way, we are affected by our environment and we can take steps to ensure we are a healthy, growing plant. Do we read our Bibles and pray frequently, are we in a healthy community, are we encouraged or discouraged by those who surround us, how much and with what do we make ourselves busy, do we get enough sleep?

Illustration: Personal story about what differences these things have made to you. Communicate how your life has been better as a result.

Buzz groups: Is the environment that you're in at the moment conducive to your healthy growth, or are you only able to maintain the basics? What could you do to increase your spiritual health or fitness in order that you might produce more fruit?

3. Fruit of the Spirit... Not fruit of our effort!

- This is a work of God in and through us, not of our own energy. We're made in God's image so God knows us better than we know ourselves. When we're filled with His Spirit we are transformed towards the image of God in us - the very best version of ourselves!
- We are all different – different people will excel in different areas. We will only ever be good at being ourselves, not striving to be like someone else.
- We must also remember that fruit develops over time. It doesn't suddenly appear. We therefore shouldn't be discouraged if the fruit is small for a time as this develops strength and perseverance.
- The key is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. How do we do that?

Ideas for ministry: It's important at the start of this series for the Pastor to lead a prayer session of everyone receiving the Holy Spirit. They should model how we can ask God to fill us, listen for words / pictures, then pray into those. Always ensure prayer is respectful, positive, encouraging and not intense.

Challenge for quiet time during the week: Which Fruits of the Spirit do you know you're challenged in? Could you be more kind? More self controlled?

Spend time praying for the Holy Spirit to fill you and find times each day to nurture these gifts.