

The Fruit of the Spirit is Goodness

(Galatians 5:22-23)

Introduction

[Teacher, hold up some pictures of fruit.] What kind of a tree did this [orange] grow on? (Orange tree.) What kind of a tree did the [banana] grow on? (Banana tree). You can tell what kind of a tree it is by the kind of fruit that grows on it, can't you? Well, it's the same way with people. You can tell what kind of a person you are by the "fruit" of your life. [Teacher, before class, let some fruit turn rotten. Then, show it to the children.] Does your life produce rotten fruit or good fruit?

Have you ever thought about what kind of fruit your life is producing? Jesus often used trees as an example of people's lives.

Matthew 7:17-20

A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. (18) A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. (19) So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. (20) Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.

People can tell what kind of a person you are when they see the fruit of your life. Some people's lives produce rotten fruit like selfishness and meanness. Other people's lives produce good fruit full of love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. When people see someone with good fruit like that, they'll know that person has a close walk with God.

We don't want our lives to produce rotten fruit, do we? Let's pray and ask God to help our lives produce good fruit.

Opening Prayer

Father, we love You and want to please You in everything that we do in life. Please teach us this morning how important it is for us to make good choices in our lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

...run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. (12) Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you... (1 Timothy 6:11-12 NLT)

Lesson

We have been learning about the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The first fruit is **love**. Love is not just a feeling, it's an action word. And, if we truly have the fruit of the Spirit, we choose to love people with God's kind of love, even when they don't deserve it or even when it's inconvenient to us.

The second fruit is **joy**. True joy comes from having Jesus in your life and knowing that you will live forever with him in heaven. True joy comes from the inside out; not from something that happens to us.

The third fruit is **peace**. Because Jesus paid for our sins on the cross, we have peace with God. Now it is our responsibility to do all we can to live in peace with everyone; we're to be peacemakers.

The fourth fruit is **patience**. Patience is trusting that God has a difficult situation under control and being willing to wait for Him to solve the problem. It's being willing to forgive others when they do things that bug us because you know that God has forgiven you for so much. Patience is not something that you are born with; you have to develop

it. It takes great courage and faith to wait upon God's timing and for His purposes in your life to be fulfilled.

The fifth fruit is **kindness**. Just like love, joy, peace, and patience; kindness is not just a feeling, it's an action word. God's kind of *kindness* is self-sacrificing; it's having compassion on others and being willing to do something for them without expecting to get anything in return.

The next fruit is **goodness**.

How many of you have been told by your mom or dad, "*Be a good boy!*" or "*Be a good girl!*"? What does that mean exactly? Most of us would say that to be good, you shouldn't do anything that's bad. Goodness involves doing things that are right, but it goes way beyond staying out of trouble. **Doing things God's way, instead of the way everyone else does them, is the definition of real goodness.**

We show goodness by choosing to obey God, even when it is hard. We should be actively looking for opportunities to do what God says is the right thing to do.

That's what Daniel and his friends did when they were taken off to Babylon. Let's turn in our Bibles to the book of Daniel, Chapter 1.

Many years after King David ruled Israel, four boys who were probably about 14 years old, lived in Israel. But, because the Israelites did not remain faithful to God, God allowed them to be captured by the Babylonians.

The armies of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and took the people captive, including these four boys. They were forced to march all the way to Babylon, 900 miles away, and put into slavery.

Upon arriving in Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, gave orders to his chief official to choose the best young men from the captives.

Daniel 1:4

"Select only strong, healthy, and good looking young men," he said. "Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the languages and literature of Babylon."

Nebuchadnezzar knew he needed clever men to help him rule the Hebrew people. They were to be taught the language and knowledge of Babylon. They would be trained in philosophy, literature, and astronomy. At the end of three years, they would be ready to enter the King's service as advisors.

Among those chosen were Daniel and his three friends. Now, these boys may have been excited to be chosen; that meant they would not be treated like slaves like all the rest of the people taken to Babylon from Israel. But along with this privilege came problems – they were to be fed from the king's table.

Daniel 1:5

The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.

When Daniel and his three friends came into the dining room for their first meal they realized that the food being served was strictly against God's laws. Certain meat, such as pork, is forbidden by the Jewish law. And, there are many special instructions in the Old Testament regarding how to fix food the proper way. The food offered to them had not been prepared according to those laws and therefore would not be right for them to eat.

Also, before eating, the king usually offered his food to the false gods as part of worshiping the idols of the Babylonian people. Eating *that* food would be just like worshiping the idols—not honoring God.

Daniel might have been thinking, "*If we obey the king and eat the food, we will disobey God. But if we don't eat the food, we will disobey*

the king and he may have us killed.” This was a tough decision for Daniel to make. It would have been easy for Daniel and his friends just to go ahead and eat the king’s food. They might have thought, “No one will ever know. Our parents are not here and besides, that law is so old-fashioned, and everybody else is doing it... what would they think if we didn’t go along with the crowd?”

Daniel and his friends decided that no matter what happened they would obey God. They knew they must do what is right. God gave Daniel and his friends courage to obey God’s rules. That is true *goodness*.

Daniel 1:8

But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods.

The word “*defile*” means to make dirty or impure. Daniel chose not to eat that which he knew would displease God; he chose to do the *good* thing—the right thing.

God wants you to make good choices in your life. You are to purposely keep your life pure and clean so that God can use you for His plans and purposes. You must make a promise to yourself and to God that you will always do what is right and not to give into pressures around you.

It must have been hard for Daniel to keep this promise with the others eating all that fine-looking food. But to eat it would be wrong.

It’s easier to resist temptation if you have thought through your beliefs well before the temptation arrives. Daniel and his friends made their decision to be faithful to the laws of God long before they were faced with the king’s delicacies, so they did not hesitate to stick with their beliefs.

We get into trouble if we have not previously decided where to draw the line. Before such situations arise, decide on your commitments, then when temptation comes, you will be ready to say, “*No!*”

Daniel 1:9

Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel.

God blesses those who honor Him. And, He will bless you, too, if you make a commitment to always do what is pleasing to God, no matter what others may think or say about you.

Daniel was determined to obey God. And God gave him an idea. Daniel asked if it would be all right if they had just vegetables to eat and good plain water to drink. He suggested they be put on a 10-day test to see if they stayed strong and healthy.

Daniel 1:12-14

“Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water,” Daniel said. (13) “At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king’s food. Then make your decision in light of what you see.” (14) The attendant agreed to Daniel’s suggestion and tested them for ten days.

The attendant agreed to try the experiment. For ten days, Daniel and the other boys ate nothing but vegetables and drank only water.

Daniel 1:15-16

At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king. (16) So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others.

At the end of the 10-day test they looked fit and were allowed to continue their vegetarian diet for the next three years. And, God gave these four young men more wisdom than the king’s own advisors.

Daniel and his friends had made the right choice. God gave them the courage they needed to obey Him. God will give you the strength to make the right choices if you make a decision in your heart to please God in all that you *think*, all that you *say*, and all that you *do*. God will help you say “*No*” to sin and He’ll help you choose what is right.

It's not always easy to do the right thing. Sometimes it's hard to make a good choice. When might it be hard for you to stand up for what is right? (When everyone else is disobeying God's commands. When you feel tired or angry.)

Sometimes we get tempted to do wrong. We might be afraid that others will make fun of us, or we might not have confidence to do things the other kids aren't going along with. There are times when we don't feel like being kind or loving, but even then – especially then – we are to choose to do the loving thing, and make the right choices.

If we ask, God will help us do what is good and help us obey Him. That's how His fruit of *goodness* grows in our lives.

Daniel and his three friends were only four young men among many Jewish captives. How do you think Daniel and his friends felt during the ten days when all the other boys were eating and drinking at the King's table? Why do you think the other Jewish boys did not stand up for what they knew was right?

How did God honor Daniel and his friends for choosing to do what they knew was good?

Daniel and his friends did the right thing in their school even when no one else around them did. Doing things God's way, instead of the way everyone else does them, is what true *goodness* is.

God is our Father and He is perfectly good. When we choose to do good things, it's a way of telling Him we love Him. And, when you do what is right, it helps others grow in goodness, too.

After all, that's why God plants the seeds of the fruit of the Spirit in us. He wants others to come to know Him by seeing our lives. People will follow your example. So it's important that you do everything you can to grow the fruit of the Spirit in your life.

Closing Prayer

Father, You are good. We know we grow in goodness by spending time with You and thinking about Your goodness. Help us to always choose to do the good and right thing, even when we are the only ones doing what makes You happy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Snack

Apples.

Game Center

Playing the Hand You're Dealt

We've been taking a lot about goodness. Everything good comes from God, because God is good. God wants us to live holy lives – lives set apart from the world. He wants us to live lives that are filled with goodness. But it's not always easy. Let's practice some ways to show goodness.

[Teacher, have kids sit in a circle. Set the deck of "School Situation" cards on the table. Invite a child to pick up a card, read it, and say how he or she would feel in that situation and what the right choice would be in that situation.]

School Situation Cards

<p>Your best friend asks you to help him cheat on a math test. You want him to keep being your best friend. You could offer to tutor him, but that won't help him on this test. What do you do?</p>	<p>You saved your allowance money and did extra chores for weeks so you could buy that special toy. Your family is going to stop at the toy store right after church. Your Sunday school teacher announces that your class is taking a collection for a family who lost everything in a fire. You feel the wad of money in your pocket. What do you do?</p>
<p>Your teacher is sick. You have a substitute teacher. Everyone is acting badly and trying to get away with everything they can. You want to fit in. What should you do?</p>	<p>Everyone is picking on an unpopular kid in the class. If you are nice to this person, you might be picked on too. How can you show God's goodness to the unpopular kid and to your friends?</p>
<p>You are invited to go to someone's house to watch a video with a lot of violence in it. You really want to see it. However, you know that your parents would be very upset with you if you watched the movie. Why is watching the movie not a good thing to do? Can you think of another thing you and your friend could do together that would be fun for both of you and reflect God's goodness?</p>	<p>You've been busy all day and haven't had a chance to read your Bible or pray. You get a call from your friends. They want to go see a movie and invite you to come along. You know that goodness grows when we spend time with our good God. Think of three different ways you can handle this.</p>

<p>Your parents are tired, and they're taking a nap on the couch. They've asked you to be quiet while they sleep. Name three ways you can demonstrate God's goodness to them while they sleep.</p>	<p>It's time for you and your sister to draw chores from the chore jar for the week. You are really lucky. You drew all the good chores while your sister drew all the nasty chores! Do you have opportunities to demonstrate God's goodness in this situation?</p>
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[Teacher, after each child has had a chance to respond to the situation card, ask:]

Would it be hard for you to live out God's goodness in this situation? Why?

Sometimes it's easy to imitate God's goodness. Other times it's hard, just as it was hard for Daniel and his friends. But God wants us to imitate His goodness all the time. And God helps us, just as He helped Daniel and his friends.

Or use the following questions in another game of your choice:

1. What happened to Daniel and his friends in Babylon? (Chosen to serve the king. Given the kings' food to eat.)
2. What did Daniel and his friends choose to do? (To obey God's rules, no matter what.)
3. How did Daniel and his three friends look after ten days of only eating vegetables and water? (Stronger than the others.)
4. What are some of God's commands from the Bible? (Love others, don't lie. Care for people who are different from you.)

5. When might it be hard to obey God's commands? (When everyone else is disobeying God's commands. When we don't feel like being kind or loving.)
6. How do you think Daniel and his friends felt during the ten days when all the other boys were eating and drinking at the King's table?
7. Why do you think the other Jewish boys did not stand up for what they knew was right?
8. How did God honor Daniel and his friends for choosing to do what they knew was good?

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