

HOMEGROWN

CULTIVATING *kids* IN THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT



DR. JOSH & CHRISTI STRAUB

LifeWay Press® Nashville, Tennessee

Published by LifeWay Press®

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ISBN: 978-1-5359-5015-2

Item: 005813576

Dewey decimal classification: 248.84

Subject heading: HOLY SPIRIT / SPIRITUAL FORMATION /
SPIRITUAL LIFE

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Printed in the United States of America.

Adult Ministry Publishing, LifeWay Church Resources,
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234

EDITORIAL TEAM, ADULT MINISTRY PUBLISHING

Michelle Hicks
Manager, Adult Ministry
Short Term Bible Studies

Elizabeth Hyndman
Content Editor

Lindsey Bush
Production Editor

Heather Wetherington
Art Director

Chelsea Waack
Graphic Designer

Alexis Ward
Cover Design

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About the Authors

Josh Straub

Josh Straub, Ph.D., cherishes his role as husband and dad. A champion of human empathy, Josh leads Famous at Home, a company equipping leaders, organizations, military families, and churches in emotional intelligence and family wellness. Josh also is a Fellow of the Townsend Institute for Leadership and Counseling. As a marriage and family coach and consultant with The Straub Co., and professor of child psychology/crisis response, Josh coaches leaders to be famous at home so they can thrive on their stage. He also speaks regularly for Joint Special Operations Command and serves military families across the country.

Josh is author/coauthor of four books including *Safe House: How Emotional Safety Is the Key to Raising Kids Who Live, Love, and Lead Well* and coauthor, along with his wife Christi, of their first children's book called, *What Am I Feeling?* (B&H Kids, 2019). He and Christi also host the *In This Together* podcast, and in partnership with LifeWay Christian Resources, are the creators of *22:6 Parenting*, a community of parents growing together to encourage the spiritual growth of their kids.

Christi Straub

Christi Straub, M.A., M.B.A., is a native Canadian, wife to an American, and momma to two feisty kiddos. She is a marriage and family coach and leads The Straub Co., an organization where she and her husband, Josh, coach families to live, love, and lead well. Christi is a Fellow of the Townsend Institute for Leadership and Counseling. Her honesty, wittiness, and transparency are contagious. She is co-host of the *In This Together* podcast and is coauthor of the children's book, *What Am I Feeling?* (B&H Kids, 2019).

When she and Josh aren't working together, they spend time on the lake on their 1974 Crestliner, train their disobedient puppy, and watch their kids crush karaoke on a stage built in their dining room.

Introduction

We want to begin by stressing how incredibly grateful we are for parents who have a desire to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in their kids. You've been given a unique privilege and responsibility to disciple them in the ways of the Lord.

But that's easier said than done. You don't have to be a parent for long to feel like, in some way, you're already messing up. That's why we want to begin by assuring you, if you feel inadequate, you're not alone. Many of us didn't grow up in homes with parents who disciplined us, let alone taught us about the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, what an amazing encouragement it is to begin a legacy of modeling for your kids the love for the Scriptures and our great God. There's nothing more important. With that said, here are a few things to keep in mind as you cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in your children.

1. We were not meant to teach our children alone. Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 6 the best way to instill the love and commands of God onto the hearts of our kids. But he wasn't just speaking to parents. He was speaking to Israel as a whole. Today that would be like addressing the entire church. In other words, when you need help, or have a question, don't be afraid to ask. You can talk to your pastor, another close friend, or an older couple in your church you look up to. Whomever it is you admire, seek them out. We're in this together.
2. As you navigate your way through the study, keep in mind that not all children learn the same way. Developmentally, our kids are unlikely to be on the same emotional or spiritual level. Understanding each child individually helps us know how we can best disciple them. We want our kids to be interested in what they learn. Keep it fun!
3. Keep in mind that the goal of discipling our children is not just to help them learn the truths of the Bible but to also apply these truths in how they live their lives, especially with how they treat others. We believe wholeheartedly that spiritual maturity and emotional maturity go hand-in-hand.
4. Which leads us to our last point—one that cannot be understated. As parents, the best way to cultivate our kids in the fruit of the Spirit is to be growing in the fruit of the Spirit ourselves. Never be shy about sharing with your child what God is teaching you from His Word. We have to tell them—and more importantly—show them by our fruit.

Walking Alongside You!

Christi + Josh

How to Use This Study

This study may be a little different from other studies you've done because it's meant to be a study for your whole family. Each week, you'll find a group discussion guide, a parent study guide, applications, and family activities. While they are labeled as "Day 1," "Day 2," and so on, we do not want you to feel rushed or guilty if you are not able to do the study in that time frame. Have grace for yourself and your children as you grow together. This study is meant to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in you as you, in turn, help cultivate those fruit in your children.

Group Discussion Guide

If you meet with a small group of other parents, use these questions to guide your discussion. We've placed them after the week of study so you can discuss what you learned throughout the week, what worked for your kids, and what didn't. These questions are optional—meant to be used as a guide instead of a to-do list. Allow discussion to vary as needed to encourage and challenge the parents involved.

If you would like to meet before beginning the study to introduce the topic and meet other parents, use the following as a guide for discussion:

Tell us about your family. What are your kids' names and ages?

Read Galatians 5:16-25 aloud.

What do you know about the fruit of the Spirit?

What do you hope to learn and gain from this study of the fruit of the Spirit?

What's your biggest challenge in teaching your kids to walk in the Holy Spirit?

What does it look like to keep in step with the Spirit personally? In your family?





Pray together as a group, that you all might be encouraged this week as you learn more about the fruit of the Spirit. Pray for your families, that they will be open to the time spent in God's Word.

Parent Study Guide

These pages are for you, as parents, to learn a little more about each fruit of the Spirit while reflecting on how this fruit shows up in your life and the lives of your children. We hope these questions, examples, and Scriptures will deepen your study of the Holy Spirit and the way of life for believers. You can complete these pages alone or with your spouse.

Application and Family Activities

We suggest you set up a weekly “Homegrown time” for the entire family—a time you plan to gather and discuss what you’re learning and do the family activities suggested in this book. We also know that children are often on different spiritual, intellectual, and emotional levels within one home, so you may want to take advantage of one of four key times of the day (waking up, drive time, dinner time, and bedtime). We’ve made suggestions for how to discuss the fruit of the Spirit during those key times throughout this study. This can be a more one-on-one approach, which will provide your child the opportunity to ask questions or share thoughts and concerns they may not want their siblings to hear.

Understanding My Child

Each week, you’ll find a page with some practical tips for teaching your child biblical truths and Bible skills. We hope these will be a helpful learning tool for all ages, with the parents learning right alongside their kids!

Optional Videos

Want more coaching, tips, and practical help from Dr. Josh + Christi? Watch the free coaching videos for each fruit of the Spirit at 226Parenting.com/HomegrownVideos.

THE FRUIT OF THE

Spirit

IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE,

patience,

KINDNESS, GOODNESS,

faithfulness,

GENTLENESS, AND

self-control.

GALATIANS 5:22-23





SESSION 1: THE FOUNDATION FOR FRUIT

As parents, the thought of cultivating our children in the fruit of the Spirit can feel like a pipe dream some days. Busyness creeps in. Tempers flare. Just getting our kids into bed sometimes feels like a massive parenting win.

And now I'm expected to get my son to be kind? And my daughter to have self-control? My children just watched me lose self-control and snap at my spouse.

We get it. That's our story too. We feel like we're starting from behind, like there's no way it could happen. Here's the good news: You're not alone. You have the Holy Spirit's help. In fact, none of us can grow these supernatural qualities on our own willpower.

And guess what? You *will* fail as a parent. So admit your failures faster. Seek forgiveness. Repent. And keep growing. That's what our kids need! Trust Jesus with eternity and with your parenting, and consider the power of His words:

My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples.

JOHN 15:8

Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So you'll recognize them by their fruit.

MATTHEW 7:19-20

If John is right, and there really is “no greater joy” than to hear of those “walking in truth” (3 John 4), then what are we waiting for?

This week in your group time and in your weekly parenting guide, we're going to lay the groundwork for studying the fruit of the Spirit. We'll cover five points:

1. We must be spiritually connected.
2. The fruit of the Spirit is interconnected.
3. Growth takes time.
4. Growth begins in the home.
5. Growth continues in community.





Day 1

We Must Be Spiritually Connected.

If you worry you don't have what it takes to cultivate your kids in the fruit of the Spirit, you're in good company. The only way any parent can do this is by remaining in Jesus and being spiritually connected. Apart from Him, you can do nothing.

Consider what Jesus said,

Truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces much fruit.

JOHN 12:24

To grow in the fruit of the Spirit means we crucify our flesh and surrender our lives to Jesus Christ. From that moment of salvation, "the Spirit of God lives in you" (1 Cor. 3:16). But what does that mean for our kids, especially if they developmentally aren't yet able to understand what it means to receive Jesus as their Savior and Lord?

We believe kids understand more than we think. The environment we establish in our homes is critical for the seed of salvation to give birth to life in our kids. We want our homes to be permeated with the gospel.

Let's consider the moment Jesus rebuked the disciples when parents were taking their children to Jesus.

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me. Don't stop them, because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." After taking them in his arms, he laid his hands on them and blessed them.

MARK 10:13-16

Notice “the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” and “whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” In other words, we must come to the gospel with a childlike faith.

Our kids are the perfect examples for us to learn how to trust Him!

Consider the soil (or the spiritual and emotional climate) of your home. Is it such that when your children hear the Word, they understand it experientially because they see it lived out as part of an everyday conversation?

Read Matthew 13:3-9,18-23. How does thinking of your own home being an environment where seeds are dropped for your children change how you read this passage?

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He is indeed a Person, not some spiritual force.

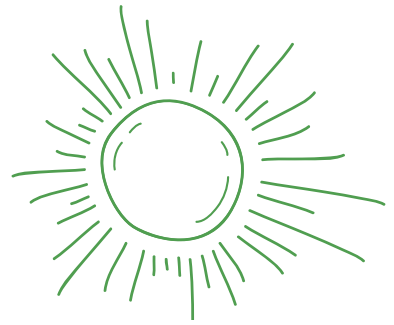
Read Jesus’ words:

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.

JOHN 14:26

What role does the Holy Spirit currently play in your life?





Read the following verses. Make a list of what you learn about the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:1-11

Romans 8:26-27

Ephesians 4:30

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

Accurate or inaccurate, what beliefs about the Holy Spirit do you carry into this study?

What has prevented you from pursuing the Holy Spirit in a deeper, more intimate way?

Read Luke 17:33; Galatians 5:24-25; and Philippians 1:21. In one sentence, write down your greatest takeaway from these passages about being spiritually connected.

In what ways do your children see you dying to self?

In what ways do you see your kids growing close to God? (Asking to pray, reading the Bible, choosing to obey, singing Bible songs, etc.)

If you were to ask your kids who Jesus is to them, what do you think they would say?



Application

MORNING PRAYER

Lord, I pray my kids receive salvation in Jesus Christ. May my children come to know, love, and serve You all the days of their lives.

DINNERTIME STORY

Tell each of your children one fruit of the Spirit you see them living out and you admire.

BEDTIME QUESTION

What values do you think God wants to see in us?

ACTIVITY

Sit down around the table together tonight as a family. Ask your kids make a list of five things they admire about each of their siblings. Talk about them as a family. Go around the table and honor each child aloud. Use construction paper, markers, crayons, or other creative ways to make these lists. Encourage your kids post their honor lists where your family can see them. Help your children, one time each day, practice using the list to find a creative way to honor their brother(s) or sister(s). Parents, you too! Write an honor list for your spouse while the kids work on theirs.





Day 2

The Fruit of the Spirit Is Interconnected.

Read Galatians 5:22-23, and notice the word *fruit* and how it's singular. The list that follows is plural predicate, meaning they all go together. They are interconnected.

Are you beginning to see why the fruit of the Spirit is more than character traits? None of us can grow in the fruit of the Spirit apart from the Spirit.

We show the pure fruit of the Spirit as we take time to develop these qualities together.

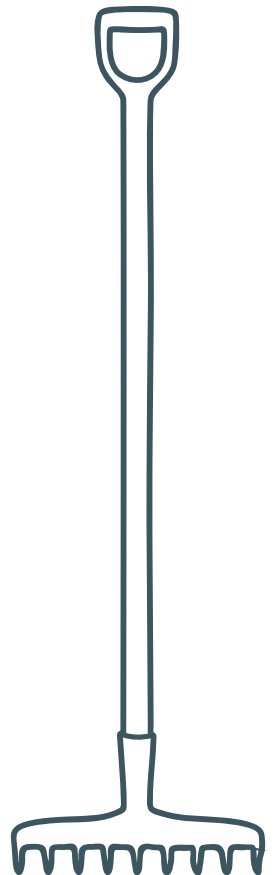
Read the last sentence of Galatians 5:23. What does this mean to you?

Read Galatians 5:25. What do you think it means to "keep in step with the Spirit"? Name one way you can do that to better cultivate the fruit in your life.

Read Galatians 5:14. How does it relate to verses 22-23?

What two characteristics of the fruit has God most cultivated within you?

What two characteristics of the fruit do you need to grow in most? Why?



What about your kids? Which do you see in their lives and which need to be cultivated more?



Application

MORNING PRAYER

Father, I thank You that as my children come to know You, they become light in the Lord. I pray that they “live as children of light—for the fruit of the light consists of all goodness, righteousness, and truth” (Eph. 5:8-10).

DINNERTIME STORY

Tell your children the story about how you came to know the Lord.

BEDTIME QUESTION

Tell me about Jesus. What do you know about Him?

ACTIVITY

The “Fruit” of a Song: Use the radio or a music app to play just the first few beats of a song, and then hit pause or turn it down. See who can guess the name and artist of the song. Experiment with different genres. Top 40. Country. Christian. The first part of the game is to find out how many of the songs your kids already know.

The second part of the game is to ask the question, “You know the name of the song. Now, what’s it about? What message is it trying to get across?” Many kids get caught up in tunes without thinking about or understanding the lyrics. Use this game to talk about the fruit of a song. If you have older kids, have them look up the lyrics and read them aloud. Use this game as a way to also teach about what we listen to and the influence it has on what we believe and how we live.



Day 3

Growth Takes Time.

Do you ever get frustrated with your kids because they seem to have forgotten today what you told them not to do yesterday? It's like we have to discipline them for slamming the door, hitting their siblings, not eating their food, not staying in bed, or being disrespectful day after day.

Our natural instinct is to think, *What's wrong with my kids?* Or maybe, *What's wrong with me that I can't get them to listen?* Can you imagine what our heavenly Father feels when we (as adults) seem to constantly neglect the lessons He's trying to teach us? Ouch.

Paul used botanical growth as the illustration to describe what it means to grow in the Spirit, to be sanctified.

Keep this in mind as you go through the study and be encouraged that, just like you, your kids are a work in progress. Change doesn't happen overnight. We don't know about you, but this really helps us take the pressure off. Perhaps your patience is already growing!

Read Ephesians 6:18.

Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.

EPHESIANS 6:18

As parents, we're placed as the spiritual authority over our children. Irrigation systems supply crops with water by means of canals to help the plants grow. Think of your prayers as an irrigation system for your child. Prayer, like water, is crucial for our children's growth over time.

How do you view prayer as a spiritual irrigation system for your child?

In what ways can you begin more effectively praying for your child?

Read Matthew 3:8. What do you learn from this verse? How can you practically apply this to your children?

Read John 15:1-8. Why is it difficult to remain or abide in Christ?

In light of verse 8, how has God turned your own brokenness or pain into fruit in your life? In what ways has He placed spiritual irrigation systems in your life?



Application

MORNING PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for establishing me in Your authority. I pray Your authority over my kids, commanding generational sins to cease in our family lineage, in the name of Jesus.

DINNERTIME STORY

Everyone share at the table tonight: *What's one thing you learned today that you didn't know when you woke up?*

BEDTIME QUESTION

Name one thing that happened this week that you're incredibly grateful for.

ACTIVITY

Today's Heroes: Take turns, either on the drive home today or during down time at home, telling stories about someone you saw live out the fruit of the Spirit. Identify the characteristics of the fruit you saw lived out (love, goodness, self-control, peace, etc.).





Day 4

Growth Begins in the Home.

As far back as the Old Testament, Moses implored families to repeat the words of God to their children—to “talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deut. 6:7).

If your children are little fruit trees, then consider your home the orchard.

Paul later wrote in the New Testament,

Fathers, don't stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

EPHESIANS 6:4

The Greek word for “training” in this verse means *to counsel*, and refers to placing the mind in a proper place, as to reason with our kids by “warning [or] admonition.”¹

Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of this verse beautifully illustrates this principle:

Fathers, don't exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master.

EPHESIANS 6:4, THE MESSAGE

This is where we see a clear distinction between raising our kids with natural character traits and cultivating the supernatural fruit of the Spirit.

Raising our kids with character traits is not a bad thing. Yet in the natural world, one character trait at the expense of another can be challenging. For example, teaching our kids to be nice to others is noble. But if our kids become nice because they’re afraid of rejection, the character trait is built on selfish motives. Instead, when we teach our kids that kindness means we look out for the best interests of others, we can cultivate the supernatural work of the Spirit in our kids to *faithfully* confront their friends for





wrong behavior in a *gentle, kind, and loving* way, *patiently* waiting for the “right time and procedure” (Eccl. 8:6).

Granted, this happens when we as parents, “remain in” the vine ourselves (John 15:4-5) and lead our kids “in the way of the Master” (Eph. 6:4, The Message).

To emphasize this point, one research study set out to find the top ten parenting strategies that achieve the outcomes we’re looking for in our kids.² As you may guess—and consistent with remaining in the vine—love and affection came in at the top of the list. But what shocked even the researcher is that the second greatest parenting strategy to get the outcomes we’re looking for in our kids is how a parent manages his or her own stress.

As sociologist Brené Brown writes, “The question isn’t so much ‘Are you parenting the right way?’ as it is: ‘Are you the adult that you want your child to grow up to be?’”³

How does it make you feel as a parent when your child doesn’t want to read the Bible or pray?

How have you viewed your role as being a discipler to your child?

In what specific ways do you see yourself discipling your child?

As parents, we will mess up. We will say things we regret. We will yell. We will be inconsistent. However, as Romans 8 confirms, beating ourselves up for it does no good.



Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.

ROMANS 8:1-2

In fact, research shows that if we can be emotionally safe with our kids just forty percent of the time, we can still get the outcomes we desire in our kids. Why? Because research shows that “repair” is one of the greatest parenting strategies you have as a parent.⁴ What does the Bible say about repair? It calls it forgiveness, and it tells us to practice it—a lot.⁵

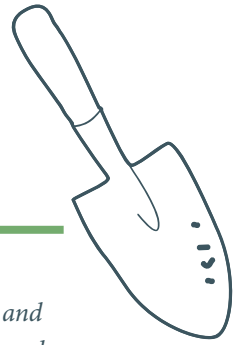
Read Luke 7:47 and Luke 17:4. What do these verses teach us about forgiveness?

What lessons do we teach our kids when we seek their forgiveness for our wrongs?

How have you seen other parents disciplining their kids in a way that has encouraged you?



Application



MORNING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, multiply the fruit and work of my children's hands. Give me insight and understanding to raise my children in such a way that they hear those most coveted words, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matt. 25:21).

DINNERTIME STORY

Tell your children about a moment you felt most proud of them. What specifically did they do?

BEDTIME QUESTION

If you could choose one thing to do together as a family this weekend, what would it be?

ACTIVITY

Time Travel: Have kids talk about a time they wish they had treated someone differently or even stuck up for themselves. For instance, I had a nickname when I was growing up that turned from "Strauby" to "Strappy." Though I hated the name, I didn't tell anyone. I just allowed people to call me that name. Also, in middle school, I watched a group of kids tease a girl who clearly hadn't showered. Rather than sticking up for her, I just watched in fear that I might be bullied too.

Use this activity as an opportunity to reflect on a time you wish you had stuck up for yourself or for someone else. Use these scenarios not to beat up on yourself, but to learn from these experiences how you can stick up for others and yourself in the future. To add excitement, role-play the scenario as if it is happening again, and explore how you, or your kids, would handle the situation differently.



Day 5

Growth Continues in Community.

Though growth begins in the home, it continues in community.

Motivational speaker Jim Rohn is credited with famously touting that “you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.”⁶ The law of averages supports such a notion. In other words, you become who you spend time with. Further emphasizing this point, Paul wrote, “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals’” (1 Cor. 15:33). On the positive side, “Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another” (Prov. 27:17).

Who are the people you surround yourself with? Can you recognize them by their fruit?

What about the people you surround your kids with? Are they growing in a spiritually and emotionally safe environment that challenges their growth but gives them the support they need?

In what ways do you see others disciplining their children?

Think about the five people in your life closest to you right now. Do they help you grow in the fruit of the Spirit by how they live?

What people spend time cultivating fruit in the life of your child? Think of coaches, children's leaders at church, pastors, family members, and so forth. Be sure to thank and encourage them regularly.

Our 22:6 Parenting community expressed being "too busy" or "there's not enough time" as the single greatest struggle of parents today. What activities in your family/child's life could be cut out because they're not producing fruit?



Application

MORNING PRAYER

Holy Spirit, since the flesh is opposed to the Spirit, teach my kids what it means to walk in You, to pray to You at all times, and continually grow Your fruit (Gal. 5:22-23).

DINNERTIME STORY

Tell your kids about your parents. What two or three important values did your parents instill in you growing up?

BEDTIME QUESTION

What's the silliest thing you saw or heard this week?

ACTIVITY

Find, make, or buy a picture frame with three to five spaces for pictures. Sit down with your children and talk about what a mentor is. Ask your kids who they go to when they need help. Who are they most likely to talk to? Don't be offended if it's not you, especially if your kids are a little older. We need other like-minded voices speaking into our kids' lives. The goal in this activity is to help them find three to five godly people who are producing fruit they can surround themselves with. They can be older family members, pastors, coaches, teachers, or a neighbor. Find or take a picture of your kids with that person and fill it in one of the slots. Hang the picture in their bedroom as a reminder of the people who love and support them.





Bonus Application

MORNING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, surround my children with friends, mentors, and loved ones who champion and affirm our family values.

DINNERTIME STORY

Talk to your children about your favorite teacher or coach in school. Describe what made him or her your favorite and the values he or she instilled in you.

BEDTIME QUESTION

When did you feel most proud of yourself today or this week?

ACTIVITY

Buy some seeds for a garden. If you don't have a garden, plant some flowers in your home. To further illustrate the point, you could also plant a fruit tree in your yard, depending on where you live.

Use the beginning of this study to plant some roots. In other words, allow the tree to be a marker of your growing family over time. Whether you plant something small in the garden or as large as a tree in the yard, explain botanical growth to your children. The deeper the roots, the stronger the foundation and the more adversity the tree can withstand (Ps. 1:3). The shallower the root system, the less it can weather.

Ask your children to join you in planting the seed and watering it each day. Keep a journal with them of what they are doing each week to help the plant or tree grow. How much water does it need? Sunlight? Shade? Did you need to skip a day because it rained? Then, teach them to monitor the growth and journal its progress over time.

Use this plant or tree as an ongoing illustration in your home of their spiritual growth and the irrigation system necessary for producing fruit.



If you're studying with a group, take some time to discuss a few of the concepts from last week's personal and family study. What worked for you? What kinds of questions did your kids ask? We'll provide some discussion points and questions each week on these pages to help guide your conversation.

1. We Must Be Spiritually Connected.

As a group, read *Galatians 5:22-24* aloud.

Spiritual connection begins with salvation. As we use the analogy of being homegrown throughout the study, think about a seed. Farmers and gardeners alike know that in order for a seed to produce fruit, first it must die.

How does this concept relate to our salvation and our spiritual lives?

Read John 14:26. What role does the Holy Spirit currently play in your life? In the life of your family?

Read Jesus' words in *John 15:4-5* aloud.

What does it mean to "remain in" Jesus?

No matter the age of your children, how can you introduce them to Jesus? What word pictures can you use? How can you describe salvation?

2. The Fruit of the Spirit Are Interconnected.

Take notice of the word "fruit" in *Galatians 5:22* and how it's singular. The list that follows is plural predicate, meaning they all go together.

If you feel comfortable, share with the group which fruit of the Spirit God has cultivated in you the strongest and which need more cultivation.

What about your kids? Which do you see in their lives and which need to be cultivated more?

3. Growth Takes Time.

What are some ways you can stay encouraged as a parent, even during a spiritual “drought”?

Read Psalm 1:1-3 aloud.

Verse 3 describes what’s needed for the tree to grow: “flowing streams,” or irrigation systems. With this analogy in mind, what irrigation systems do your children need over time to produce fruit?

4. Growth Begins in the Home.

Read Deuteronomy 6:7. Since God established the family as the breeding ground for spiritual growth, what are some ways you can make your home more healthy and hospitable for growth?

How do you feel when you think about being a discipler to your children? What has held you back in stepping into the role of discipler to your children?

How does Romans 8:1-2 affect your mind-set as a parent?

5. Growth Continues in Community.

Though growth begins in the home, it continues in community. Paul wrote, “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals’” (1 Cor. 15:33). On the positive side, “Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another” (Prov. 27:17).

With whom do you surround yourself? Can you “recognize them by their fruit” (Matt. 7:16)?

What about the people who surround your kids? Are they growing in a spiritually and emotionally safe environment that challenges their growth but gives them the support they need?⁸