How to Grow Spiritual Fruit
Lesson 1: The Seed of Salvation
Lesson 1—The Seed of Salvation

Unit Summary
The “Fruit of the Spirit” may be a familiar topic to many children, but kids and adults alike often misunderstand the concept of growing spiritual fruit. Many Christians describe spiritual fruit as characteristics that they should work to develop in their lives. Nothing could be further from the truth! Fruit of the Spirit is—of the Spirit. These godly traits result from God’s Spirit working in our lives, not from our efforts to be better people.

This four-week series will walk children through the process of nurturing the soil of their souls so God’s Spirit might produce genuine spiritual fruit within them. After the seed of salvation has been planted in good soil and moistened with Living Water, children will discover that their spiritual lives are like growing plants; and God is like a loving gardener. They’ll learn that as they are pruned through loving discipline and abide in Jesus, spiritual fruit will blossom in their lives. This unit will guide kids—not into being “good”—but to drawing closer to the Lord so He can conform them into Jesus’ likeness.

Lesson Summary
When teaching children about God, we must never neglect the first step—their salvation. Similarly, when introducing the concept of spiritual fruit, we must begin with spiritual birth. Just as a tree starts as a small seed, a spiritual rebirth must take place before any spiritual fruit is formed. Jesus’ parable of the sower is a perfect introduction to the salvation message. A seed must be planted in each heart, accepted, and begin to grow before it can produce fruit.

Paul’s Power Principle: God created you to KNOW Him and to GROW through Him.

In this lesson, your children will...

KNOW
• God created people to know Him and to grow through Him

FEEL
• Excited about the good things God wants to do in their lives

DO
• Respond to Christ’s invitation—receiving forgiveness of sins and personal salvation
SPARK INTEREST

Choose from the following activities and ideas to engage kids and grab their attention.

Welcome!—Seed Packets
Purchase a wide variety of seed packets (flowers, fruits, vegetables). Spread the packets out on a table near the entrance or attach them to a wall or bulletin board. As children arrive, invite them to choose a package. If you have a larger group, it may be better to randomly pass them out. Encourage the kids to trade with each other if they want to do so.

Let’s Meet-n-Greet!
Turn and greet the children around you. Give kids an opportunity to show each other what seed packet they chose when they arrived. Ask them, If you could grow any plant in your backyard, what would it be? Why?

Leaders, be sure to stop whatever you are doing to move through the audience and greet the children, especially those you do not recognize. Announce any birthdays for the week. (See the How to Use DiscipleTown guide for quick and easy ways to acknowledge visitors and birthdays.)

PowerPoint Presentation
As you plan your lesson, select PowerPoint slides that correspond to the lesson elements you choose. In the “Slide Sorter” View, you can rearrange and/or delete the slides as necessary. For descriptions of the included slides and tips on their use, see the notes accompanying each slide.

Supplies

General Supplies
Bibles, puppets, video projection (optional)
Pencils, pens, paper

Spark Interest
WELCOME!: variety of seed packets
LET’S PLAY!: posterboard
CONNECT WITH YOUR KIDS: photograph

Explore Scripture
KEYVERSE: none

Inspire Action
DRAMATIZE THE POINT: cups, dirt, plants
Let's Worship!
As you lead into worship time, emphasize to the children that it is God who works in us to produce fruit, and we cannot produce fruit without His presence. Say something like, **This morning as we worship, we want to prepare our hearts so God can work in us to change us and make us more like Jesus.**

**Recommended Song:** *The Fruit of the Spirit*, public domain

Puppet Intro
Leader & puppet introduce today’s lesson. You will find a scripted version of this intro at the end of the lesson. **Supplies:** puppet

Puppet® has some bad news for the leader. As a role model for the kids, he is supposed to set a good example—but the puppet has come to a big decision. From this day forward, he’s going to be a bad puppet! He thinks it is for the good of the children. The leader is shocked to hear this and asks why. Puppet says he has heard that the new lessons are about “How to Grow Spiritual Fruit,” and he already knows all about the fruit of the Spirit (and quotes all nine from Galatians 5:22-23). However, the harder he works to produce them, the more he fails! So he’s going to try a new strategy! He is going to try to be bad, so maybe he will fail and instead end up good! Leader isn’t sure his plan will work but tells the puppet some good news—we do not produce spiritual fruit through our own effort. God’s Spirit produces the fruit, which is why it is called fruit of the **Spirit**. Puppet is relieved and asks if he then does not have to do anything at all. Leader says, “No, each week we will look at both your part and God’s part, but you are not on your own.” Puppet says that is good news because he needs help!

*PUPPET:* Develop a puppet character to use regularly. The children will get to know the personality and enjoy these regular visits. Dee, Cy, and Paul puppets are available at DiscipleLand.com

Let’s Play!—Four Soils
**Supplies:** four signs in the four corners of the room labeled: “The Path,” “Thorny Ground,” “Rocky Ground,” and “Good Soil”

This is a fun game that gets the children off their seats and moving around the room. The children each choose one corner of the room and go stand under the sign. The leader then calls out one of the four signs. The children in that corner are eliminated from the game and return to their seats. The remaining children again spread out among all four corners. Continue until only one or a few children remain—the winners.

To keep the selection random, write names of the four soils on giant cards that you randomly choose from a deck of cards, or put them on the sides of a die (see template at the end of this lesson). Since a die has six sides, you can make one side “safe” (no one is eliminated—kids may move to a new corner if they choose) and the other side “scramble” (everyone must move to a new corner).

**Option:** Do not have a “good soil” card or die face, and never call out “Good Soil.” This will show that the good soil is always the right choice. However, many children may assume that is what you want them to do, so they will gravitate there too quickly. Make sure every child moves on every turn and don’t allow children to remain in a corner two times in a row. This way, even if they favor “Good Soil,” they have to leave every other turn, thus risking elimination!
Connect with Your Kids

This object lesson primes the kids to think about value. **Supplies:** picture of yourself about the age when you became a Christian

Children need to understand that becoming a Christian marks a personal life-change—regardless of whether it takes place as a child or as an adult. Share your testimony with your kids. Show a picture of yourself about the time you accepted Jesus. Simply seeing you in the past will help them grasp that this was a historic event. Talk about how Jesus has changed your life. Include key elements of the Gospel in your testimony:

1) You realized that you had sinned against God and needed to make a payment for your sin.  
2) God loved you even though you had sinned.  
3) You realized that Jesus had paid for your sins by dying on the cross.  
4) You asked Jesus to forgive you and accepted what He did for you.

When you talk about how your life changed after you became a Christian, refer to the changes in your life as the “fruit” that God began to produce. This will help the children understand that we call the changes that God brings “fruit.”

**Note:** Do not let your testimony take more than seven to eight minutes.
Farmer Fred*: Just as the leader finishes up his or her testimony, a character dressed as a farmer (in overalls, hoe over his shoulder, straw hat, boots, etc.) walks down the street. He stops when he hears the leader mention “fruit.”

Farmer Fred: Did you say something about fruit?
Leader: Yes, I did, actually. I was talking about the fruit God produced in my life.
Fred: Fruit? God? I didn’t know God was a farmer.
Leader: Oh, He is! But He is a different sort of farmer—He’s a farmer of people.
Fred: You mean He grows people?
Leader: Exactly! He helps them grow up according to His plan.
Fred: Well, I guess He does. I see He’s got some little saplings right here. [Points to the kids.]
Leader: Yes, He does. And God isn’t just growing them up physically. He wants to help them grow up spiritually, too.
Fred: Well, I’m no expert on that, so I’ll leave that up to you here at the church. I’m more of an expert on plants n’ such.
Leader: Well, maybe you can help us out with that. Your name’s Fred, right?
Fred: Yep, that’s me. Farmer Fred.
Leader: Fred, we all got some seeds this morning. Tell us how to plant our seeds—so they will grow up well.
Fred: Absolutely! First, you’ll need to get them out of those packages!
Leader: Of course, and then put them in some dirt?
Fred: Oh, but not just any dirt. You need to put them into good soil.
Leader: What makes for good soil?
Fred: Glad you asked! It needs to be soft so the seeds can get down into the dirt and snuggle in all comfy-like—that way they can find water and put down roots.
Leader: You almost make dirt sound nice.
Fred: Dirt is very nice—for the seeds. Next, good soil can’t have rocks—they make it hard for the seeds to sprout and grow up strong.
Leader: Okay, take out the rocks, got it.
Fred: And most important, pull the weeds! They choke the little guy and hog all the water and nutrients; then the poor little plant will just wither and die.
Leader: How sad.
Fred: Truly. [Bows his head.]
Leader: You know, Jesus said that the same thing is true of the seed of salvation.
Fred: Huh? Ya lost me there, preacher.
Leader: Well, you just listen to the lesson. It’s part of our Bible story today.
Fred: I’ll do that!
Leader: Jesus knew a lot about plants and farming. He used that knowledge to explain how we grow as Christians, too!
Fred: Can’t wait ta hear it!

*CHARACTERS: These are suggested characters and names. Please feel free to change or adjust to suit your kids’ needs and tastes.
Let's Search!—Bible Dash

Supplies: Bibles

Ask all kids with Bibles to participate, or invite a few volunteers to come to the front. As children hold Bibles closed with hands on covers, announce, Let's see what the Bible has to say about fruit. State the Bible reference twice, then on the command “SEARCH!” have the students race to locate the verse. Once they have a finger on the verse, they can stand and call out, “FOUND IT!” Have the first child read the verse aloud while you project the verse on a screen via PowerPoint. See suggestions below for comments on each verse. Keep your comments brief and to the point of the lesson.

- Colossians 1:10 “Fruit” is another word for “good works.”
- Ephesians 5:9 Goodness, righteousness, truth = fruit.
- Ephesians 5:11 Evil deeds are called “fruitless.”
- John 15:16 Jesus chose us to bear fruit that will last.
- Luke 6:43-44 No good tree bears bad fruit—each tree is recognized by its own fruit.
- Matthew 12:33 A tree is recognized by its fruit.
- John 12:24 Even if a plant dies, it produces many seeds.

Paul’s Power Principle: God created you to KNOW Him and to GROW through Him.

Let’s Learn!—The Seed of Salvation  Mark 4:1-9, 13-20

Kids, I know that adults always tell you to “be good,” and you may feel that you can never be good enough! Well, I have to tell you some bad news, but I also have some good news. The bad news is that no matter how hard you try, without God in your life you will not be able to be truly good! You need the Lord to help you—because He is the only One who knows what is good all the time. The good news is that because God knows you cannot be good without Him, He never requires you to be good! Instead, He wants to help you be good when you work to get closer to Him—through prayer and faith. Then God begins changing you from the inside out! You end up being good because God is at work in your life.

We must understand why we are not really good in the first place. This is because God created us with this thing called free will. Free will means that God gave us the ability to choose whether or not to be good. Sadly, many people choose not to be good. That is why our world is broken. This is a real problem! We want to be good, but we are not really able to be good on our own. But there is also a real solution. If we let God into our lives, He will help us do good. We call God’s help “fruit.”

We are going to learn how to grow spiritual fruit. Growing fruit is not about trying hard, because that alone does not work. Instead, we are going to welcome God into our lives so He can grow the fruit in us. We cannot do it without Him! Let’s take a look at how a plant produces fruit. It all starts with a seed, like the ones you got today when you arrived. Jesus told a story about seeds in the Bible. Ask the kids to open their Bibles to Mark 4:1-9, 13-20 and read together.
Use the Salvation Cards found in a separate PDF as an interactive way to communicate the Gospel message or choose the PowerPoint slides provided. Close by discussing God’s part and our part in this process.

1 John 1:9  
**GOD’S PART:** Forgiveness  |  **YOUR PART:** Confession

**Dee’s Disciple Tip:** Plants need **SEEDS** before they can grow fruit. People need **SALVATION** before they can bear fruit.

**KeyVerse**

**Topic:** The Vine and the Branches  
**Reference:** *John 15:5*

As you introduce the KeyVerse for this unit, use these hand and body motions to help the children learn it and trigger reminders. By the fourth week, they will know the verse well and will be able to recite it without the physical actions.

(start out standing)

- I am (point up)
- the vine (snake hand through the air like a vine)
- you are (point around the room at other children)
- the branches. (pose arms like branches)
- If a man (hold out two fingers—pointing down, like legs)
- remains in Me, (wrap other hand around those two fingers)
- and I in him (pull both hands into chest)
- he will bear much fruit; (pop both arms out like branches with fists at end as “fruit” and make an audible pop with mouth after saying “fruit”)
- apart from Me (hold right arm out like a branch and with left hand pretend to chop right arm off at the shoulder)
- you can do nothing. (right arm drops to your side on the word “nothing”)
- John (trace the letter “J” shape with forefinger)
- 15:5 (left hand holds up a 1 then 5; then right hand points forward with two fingers to make the colon; then left hand crosses to other side to show a 5 where right hand did colon)

**Note:** Always begin the verse with “Jesus said” so the children understand that this is a direct quote from Jesus. Otherwise, younger children may misunderstand, thinking they are saying they are the vine as they recite.
Dramatize the Point

Act this out or read as a story. **Supplies:** five Styrofoam cups, dirt, small plants, and an unopened package of seeds. This activity works best with a teacher and six to eight student actors.

Begin the skit with a teacher welcoming the actors (who all arrive to class with a Styrofoam cup containing a small plant inside). Have the students place their cups around the room in open sight, except for one child who rather sheepishly hides his cup out of sight. One by one, have the students come up and show their plants, sharing where they placed their cup, how they watered it, pulled weeds, etc. Some can even add humor, telling how they played music for their plant or sang lullabies at bedtime. Finally, call on the last student, who comes up with his cup and an unopened package of seeds. He never even opened the package. The teacher takes the seeds back and fails him. The child offers to start now, but the teacher graciously explains that it is too late because these plants are being transplanted in the new wing of the school and will be dedicated in a special assembly that afternoon.

After the actors leave, explain that the offer of salvation is like a seed that must be planted in our hearts to take root. **Until we accept the good news, the new life does not begin. God’s love cannot grow and produce spiritual fruit.** Remind the kids that the time WILL come when it is too late to accept the seed and start growing. But thankfully, it is not too late to start today!

Object Talks—I’m a Banana!

**Supplies:** video projection

The video clip for this lesson features Karl, the Kidologist, doing a short object lesson featuring a conversation between an orange and an apple that claims it is a banana! The orange explains to the apple that because it came from an apple tree, it can only be an apple because fruit is determined by the tree it comes from, just as a person’s fruit is determined by his or her character. Use this short teaching video to show the kids or to train a leader to do the talk “live.” **Featured verse:** Matthew 12:33

Let’s Talk!—Small Group Discussion

If you break into small groups, the following discussion questions will help your group leaders get personal with their students.

1) Recite or read a list of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Discuss which is the most difficult for you to produce.
2) If you are willing to do so, share when you asked Jesus to be your Savior.
3) Do you have any questions about Jesus or what it means to be a Christian?

Have the group leaders let you know about good questions that come up. Be sure to address those questions in the future lessons, or help your leaders answer them in future small group times.
DiscipleTown Super Citizen

Choose a child who visited today for the first time. If another child brought the child as a guest, award him or her as well. (Be sure to print two certificates, in case you will need them both.)

Let’s Pray!

Prayer: This could be a day with eternal consequences! There may be children in your service who knew about God but had never made a decision to choose Jesus as their Savior until today. Some may still have questions that need to be answered before they are ready. Let the kids know it is okay to be unsure—that you once were unsure and needed to ask questions. Some children are from non-Christian homes and will not necessarily have support at home for a decision to follow Jesus. You will need to allow them time to come to Christ when they have the courage to make that decision independently of any parental guidance or support.

Dear God, thank You so much for making us free, and for still loving us when we use that freedom to disobey You. Thank You for loving us enough to send Jesus to take the punishment that we deserve for our sins. God, this room is filled with sinners, like me, who admit their own good behavior couldn’t make them right with You. A few kids here just today accepted Jesus as their Savior, and we are SO EXCITED that Your family is growing every day with new people who choose to accept Your forgiveness and salvation! We celebrate with You today! We also ask, Lord Jesus, that You continue to draw closer to Yourself those who still have questions. Bring them to that place where they, too, can reach out to You and say “YES!” to Your gift of salvation.

Father, as we begin to study How to Grow Spiritual Fruit, help us stop trying to just be good. Instead, help us grow closer to You—so You can be good through us. We want to experience what it is like to see You produce awesome spiritual fruit that we could never produce alone. Thank You for Your love, Your grace, Your mercy, and for Your fruit in our lives. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Cy’s Challenge: Challenge the children to think less about “being good” and instead to focus on growing closer to God. A practical step they can take is to drop to their knees and pray each morning—“Dear God, I want to KNOW You better. Help me GROW closer to You today.” Tell your students that if they earnestly pray that prayer, God will empower them to do the right thing—with less effort than trying really hard to be good! That is the amazing thing about the fruit of the Spirit. God produces more fruit as we get closer to Him!

Let’s Review!

If you have extra time, use these review questions to keep the kids focused on the lesson until time to dismiss. A handful of candy will help you keep their attention. After each question, take a minute to reiterate the lesson point related to the question.

1) True or False: If we try REALLY HARD, even without God in our lives, we can be perfect.
2) What was Puppet’s plan to be good?
3) What were the four types of soil the seed fell on?
4) What was the farmer’s name?
5) Where in the Bible is our KeyVerse found?
6) Who produces spiritual fruit?
For the Home

DiscipleTown Table Talker: Give each child a copy of this week’s DiscipleTown Table Talker. Be sure to show them how to put it together and encourage the kids to ask their parents to lead family devotions three times this week.

Parent Email: Copy and send the email below to help your parents connect with their kids during the week. Send them early in the week, but not on Sunday. As a courtesy, be sure parents have opted to receive these emails. Review and edit as necessary to reflect the lesson elements you have used. You can also find this email as a Microsoft Word document in your download bundle.

Dear Mom and Dad,

This week we started a new Kids Church series called How to Grow Spiritual Fruit. While we often encourage our children to behave better, during this unit, we want to help your child understand that no matter how hard we work at “being good,” without God working in our lives, our best efforts will still fall short because we live in a broken world. We will help your kids learn how to grow closer to God so He can produce spiritual fruit in their lives. The Bible clearly teaches that our efforts alone will always fail, but as we draw close to the Lord, He will make positive changes in our lives. Today we started this discussion by looking at the need to begin with a personal relationship with God. We gave kids an opportunity to put their trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. Perhaps your child even made a decision to follow Jesus!

You can use these questions to engage your child about this lesson:

1) What did you learn about the fruit of the Spirit at DiscipleTown? (Fruit is something that God produces.)
2) Have you asked Jesus to be your Savior? (Your child’s answer will be personal.)
3) What was Cy’s Challenge? (Read and pray each day to get to know God better.)

Thank you for the opportunity and honor to invest in your child. Next time we will look at what it means to grow up as a godly kid. For a sneak peek at how the Bible describes Jesus as a child—read Luke 2:52. This verse makes for a wonderful goal for any parent!

Making Disciples for Jesus,

[Your Name]
Additional Ideas

- **Hug Love**  Tell the children that the greatest of all the fruits of the Spirit is love. So during today’s lesson, any time they hear the word “love,” they are to hug someone else. If they can catch someone with his or her arms down, they get a point. At the end of Kids Church, ask the children to show with their fingers who got 1 point, 2? 3? 4? etc.

- **Orange Toss Review Game**  For this game, you need a bag of oranges and four boxes: three large, one small. Write one of the following on each of the large boxes: “rocky soil,” “thorns,” “by the path.” Write “good soil” on the small box.

  Place the boxes several feet away from a line that the competitors stand behind. Kids earn an opportunity to play the game by answering a review question from today’s lesson. When a kid answers a question correctly, hand him or her a ticket. Competitors stand behind the line and throw an orange underhanded toward the target boxes. If the orange lands in one of the large boxes, they get 10 points. If it lands in the small box, they get 100 points.

  Point out that it is harder to be good soil, but in the end, it’s the only way to have a good life—to “win.” It might be easier to just do what you want all of the time, but you will be sorry later that you didn’t obey God. Also, if you work on being good, other people will see that and want to know what’s special about you. Then you can introduce them to God!
DIRECTOR’S NOTES
The words in italics are notes for you and your puppeteers; they are not to be read aloud.

Puppet: I’m afraid I have some baaaaaaad news for you, [leader name].
Leader: Oh no, are you okay?
Puppet: Well, that depends. I know I’m supposed to be a role model for all the kiddies out there...
Leader: [Trying not to smirk.] Uh, yeah. A role model...
Puppet: I’ve come to a big decision. From this day forward, I’m going to be a [Dramatic pause. Speaks in a lower voice.] bad puppet.
Leader: I’m shocked! Why on earth would you choose to be bad?
Puppet: Well, I heard we’d be learning about the fruit of the Spirit. I already know all about love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
Leader: [Nodding.] Impressive.
Puppet: Yeah, but the harder I try to produce those fruits, the more I fail.
Leader: Oh dear.
Puppet: So I have a new plan. I’m going to try real hard to be bad. Maybe then I’ll fail and end up being good!
Leader: I don’t think that plan has much chance for success.
Puppet: It doesn’t?

Leader: In case you haven’t noticed, people don’t seem to have any trouble being bad.
Puppet: [Crestfallen.] So now what do I do?
Leader: Well, that’s the good news! You don’t have to try to produce spiritual fruit at all!
Puppet: I don’t?
Leader: No, God produces spiritual fruit. That is why it is called fruit of the Spirit.
Puppet: Awesome! So I don’t have to do anything at all?
Leader: Now, I didn’t say that. Each week we will look at both your part and God’s part, but you are not on your own.
Puppet: That is good news, ‘cause I need serious help...

*PUPPET: Develop a puppet character to use regularly. The children will get to know the personality and enjoy these regular visits. Dee, Cy, and Paul puppets are available at DiscipleLand.com

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Four Soils Randomizer

Use this cube or the one on the following page with the Let's Play segment.

1. Print out on cardstock.
2. Cut along outside of pattern.
3. Fold along grey lines away from printed side.
4. Tape/glue flaps I to inside of sides I.
5. Tape/glue flaps II to inside of sides II.
6. Glue flaps III to the inside of sides III, or use a small amount of tape on the outside of sides III.

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How to Grow Spiritual Fruit
How to Make Good Friends
How to Walk in the Spirit
How to Be Jesus' Disciple
How to Build Character
How to Navigate the New Testament
How to Explain My Faith
How to Earn Eternal Rewards
How to Follow God's Plan
How to Make Good Choices
How to Navigate the Old Testament
How to Study My Bible
How to Know the Truth
How to Discover Gifts and Talents
How to Walk Victoriously
How to Meet with God

Each DiscipleTown Unit will teach your kids an essential "how to" skill to become victorious disciples of Jesus!