

**II. Group discussion** *Each number below includes a set of questions that relate to the scripture text. We offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement on an answer. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better.*

Read Luke 13:6-9 aloud.

1. Use questions to help the group re-tell the story in their own words.

What was wrong with the fig tree?

What did the vineyard owner do?

What did the servant propose to do?

2. What was the symbolism in this story?

Who is the owner?

Who is the unfruitful tree?

*In Jesus' day, the unfruitful tree represented faithless Israel. Jesus and his Jewish hearers would have been familiar with Isaiah 5, where the prophet talks about God tearing down an unfruitful vineyard.*

3. If we imagine ourselves in this story, what character are we?

In what ways are we like the fruit tree?

*God looks for each of us to be fruitful.*

In what ways are we like the servant?

*There are situations where we nurture others.*

In what ways are we like the owner of the vineyard?

*There are times that we find ourselves in situations where we need to end a project or relationship because it is unfruitful.*

As you think about your life, which is most like your situation – a struggling tree, a nurturing servant, or needing to make a decision?

4. What kind of fruit should be present in the life of a Christian?  
*Read Galatians 5:22-25.*

If you were a tree and God graded your fruit, what might he say?

If our group was a tree what might God say about us?

If our congregation was a tree and God graded our fruit, what might he say?

5. If you want the fruit of the Spirit to grow in your life, where do you start?  
*Galatians 5:25 gives a good starting point.*

What are some areas of your life where you would like for the Spirit to exercise greater control?

What steps are you taking to intentionally put yourself in touch with the work of the Spirit?

**III. Cultivating the fruit** *Practical suggestions and reflections to help participants connect the discussion to their lives. Challenge each person to try at least one of these this week.*

Write a list of things you would like to work on as we think about walking by the Spirit and letting the Spirit produce fruit in our lives.

Talk with a friend about areas in your life where you are hesitant to trust God. Why do you hesitate? What would help you trust God more?

Go to a public place and try to spot the Christians. What is it that identifies us? How are we different from non-Christians?

If someone was to call me a hypocrite, it might be because...

## IV. Other resources

**The point** – God looks for each of us to be fruitful. If we want to see the fruit of the Spirit grow in our lives, we need to plant ourselves in the Holy Spirit.

**Prayer** *Creative suggestions for prayer focus*

- ✓ Pray Psalm 139 aloud.
- ✓ Offer a time of silent prayer for group members to pray about the growth of the Spirit's fruit in their lives. Speak each word of the fruit from Galatians 5, and then give members time to contemplate how that fruit is growing in their lives.

### Kid-friendly activity

*An activity designed to help kids and adults connect the scripture to their lives. Works best when adults participate in the activity with the kids.*

Offer a prayer of praise for the good things God is doing. If anyone in the group knows a song about the fruit of the Spirit, sing it each week of this series.

Give each group member paper and crayons. Tell the group to imagine that we are creating a time capsule that our grandchildren will open in 100 years. Draw a picture that would tell them something about you, this group, or our congregation.

Another option is to actually make a time capsule.

Read Galatians 5:22-25 aloud.

How is our time capsule like the fruit that God grows in our lives?

What role do we play in letting the Spirit grow fruit in our lives?

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### About this series

These lessons are designed to help groups explore the fruit of the Spirit as presented in Kenneson's *Life on the Vine*. They are part of a project sponsored by SaltandLightResources.com involving sermons and group discussions on this material. It would be ideal to connect small group discussion and sermon series, but these lessons are written so that they will be beneficial by themselves.

## Life on the vine: Introduction

Small group guide based on

*Life on the Vine*, by Philip Kenneson (IVP, 1999. ISBN 0830822194)

www.saltandlightresources.com

By John Grant, Jon Camp, Trey Finley, and Ben Siburt

**Theme:** What kind of fruit is growing in your life? Is it just like the fruit of the lives all around you?

In *Life on the Vine*, Philip Kenneson suggests that “the church that is being cultivated in the United States looks suspiciously like the dominant culture” (12). He points out that Christian families are doing no better than non-Christians in dealing with problems like selfishness, divorce and teen-aged sexual activity (16).

This discussion guide will introduce the concept of God looking for fruit in our lives.

**Leadership tip:** Work to facilitate discussion, not teach a lesson. View your role as a bridge between scripture and people's lives. The more you can get them to talk about how a passage connects with their lives, the more likely that the scripture will impact them. Even if their interpretation is different from yours, they will grow when they have an opportunity to discuss their faith in a supportive group setting.

**I. Relate** *Use a few of these to introduce the theme and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage individuals through these questions.*

- ❖ If our group put together a time capsule that our grandchildren would open in 100 years, what would you put in it and why?
- ❖ When you meet a new person, what are three things you might tell them about yourself? When would you tell the person you are a Christian?
- ❖ Christians are sometimes criticized for being hypocrites. How often is that a fair criticism?