



## WEEKLY LEADER GUIDE

# STORY OF MY LIFE

WEEK 5

### LIVE A BETTER STORY TEAM

#### LEADERSHIP TEAM

Reggie Joiner  
Reggie Goodin  
Carey Nieuwhof

#### CONTENT DIRECTOR

Sarah Bragg

#### BRANDING & GRAPHICS

Ryan Boon

#### SUPPORT

Meghan Hewitt  
Jeremy Landers

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MESSAGING

Crystal Chiang

#### EDITORS & WRITERS

Jared Herd  
Jonny Wills  
Laurin Greco  
Rodney Anderson

#### ADMIN/TECHNOLOGY/ PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

Hadley Brandt  
Kevin Benson

#### VIDEO PRODUCTION

Steve Underwood

### USER AGREEMENT

Live a Better Story, LLC., gladly grants permission to licensed organizations and their authorized agents to tailor LIVE A BETTER STORY materials to fit their unique requirements, locale, and format preferences. If you wish to edit the content substantively—including teaching scripts, small group guides, and any other content in which Biblical principles and concepts are presented—you are obligated to do so within the doctrinal guidelines expressed in our Statement of Faith.

These resources are intended to be downloaded and printed for use by the licensing entity only and may not be electronically transferred to or duplicated by other non-licensed entities. Any unauthorized reproduction of this material or incorporation into a new work—including podcasts or video of this content—is a direct violation of U.S. copyright laws. LIVE A BETTER STORY and the LIVE A BETTER STORY logo are trademarks of Live a Better Story, LLC.

*All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com) The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™*

# Story of My Life

## WEEK 5



### WEEK SUMMARY

We all love the idea of having an indicator or a measurement of how we're doing. We track how many steps we take each day. We count calories. We monitor our spending habits. Do you ever wish you had a way to know whether you're doing well or poorly in what really matters in life? Like in your faith and in your relationship with God? Fortunately for us, God gave us an indicator. He told us that one of the best ways to know whether we're experiencing the better life He promised is to look at the fruit we're producing. He taught that those who follow His Spirit and His ways will produce the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. He also shared that those who are living on their own will produce something different—hatred, discord, and anger. This week we'll learn how to tell what our lives are producing and what we can do to produce more good fruit—more love and less hate. Ultimately, our stories are either moving toward love, toward joy, toward peace, or away from it. And it's up to us to discern the direction we're going.



### THINK ABOUT THIS

It's easy for small groups to turn into a place where people feel like they need to have it all together in order to attend every week. Remind your small group this week—and maybe every week—that they're free to come as they are. It's your responsibility as the small group leader to set the expectation for what people's lives should look like when they arrive at small group every week. If you try to make it look like you have no doubts, no questions, no struggles, no sticky situations, the members of your group will feel the need to do the same. Since no one has it all together, start by dropping your own façade and encourage others to do the same.

Make sure everyone is aware that you're all in the midst of a journey together and no one has "arrived" at any sort of spiritual destination. We're all in the process of living our life stories. No one has it figured out, but guess what? That's okay! Remind your group members that we're all works in progress and they should simply come to group ready to share honestly what's going with them in life and in their faith journey. Maintain your own humble spirituality and you'll enable others to do the same.

### TEACHING MATERIALS



VIDEO 05



AUDIO 05

# Story of My Life

WEEK 5



BOTTOM LINE

**YOUR STORY IS EITHER MOVING  
TOWARD LOVE OR AWAY FROM IT.**

**The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives;  
love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,  
faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.**

GALATIANS 5:22-23 NLT

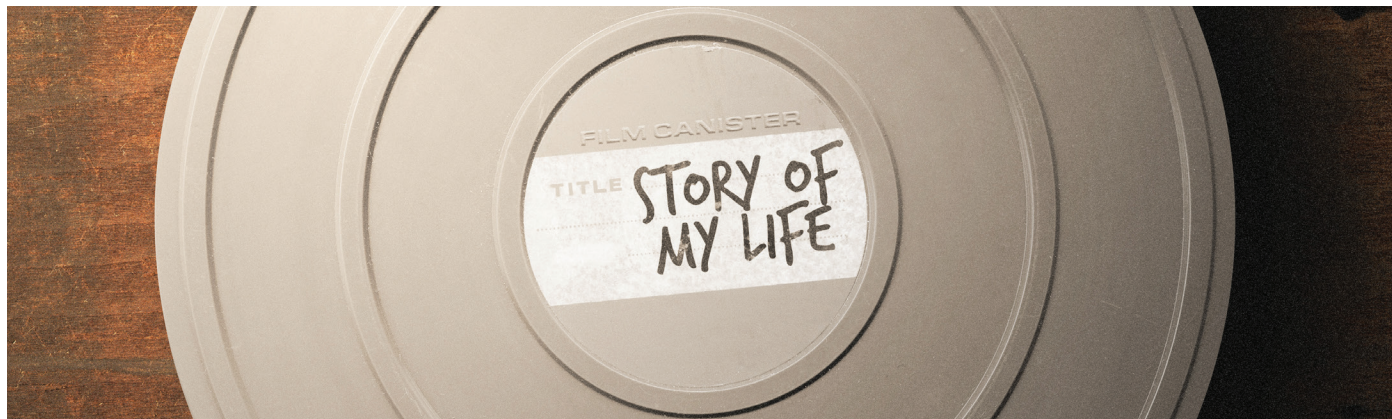
## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are a guide to get the conversation started in your group—don't feel like you need to ask everything you see here! As long as you're having a conversation, you're on the right track. Also, feel free to adjust the questions to fit the needs of your specific group.

1. WHAT'S SOMETHING IN YOUR LIFE THAT YOU'RE CONSTANTLY MEASURING OR CHECKING UP ON?
2. HOW WOULD MOST PEOPLE MEASURE OR DEFINE SPIRITUAL GROWTH?
3. GIVE AN EXAMPLE IN THE PAST WEEK WHERE YOU HAVE DISPLAYED THE FRUIT OF GOD'S SPIRIT IN SOME WAY.
4. ULTIMATELY, WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT TO PRODUCE THE KIND OF FRUIT PAUL TALKS ABOUT IN GALATIANS? READ JOHN 15:4 AS A GROUP. WHAT DOES THIS VERSE SAY ABOUT OUR RESPONSIBILITY WHEN IT COMES TO PRODUCING FRUIT?
5. PRACTICALLY SPEAKING, WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE FOR SOMEONE'S LIFE TO MOVE TOWARD LOVE? WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE FOR A LIFE TO MOVE AWAY FROM LOVE?
6. WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER ATTRIBUTES OF GOD'S FRUIT THAT PAUL MENTIONED IN GALATIANS? WALK THROUGH EACH ATTRIBUTE AND TALK ABOUT WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE TO MOVE TOWARD KINDNESS, PEACE, SELF-CONTROL, ETC. THEN TALK ABOUT WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE ATTRIBUTES THAT COME AS A RESULT OF NOT FOLLOWING GOD.
7. HOW COULD YOUR LIFE STORY BE BETTER IF YOU MOVE TOWARD LOVE (AND PEACE AND PATIENCE, ETC.) IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS?

# Communication Plan

## WEEK 5



### CONTINUING THE EXPERIENCE

Did you ever wish you could strategically communicate with your small group outside of group time? Ever wish you could find a way to share quick snippets of what they're learning or even send a word of encouragement to them?

Well . . . now you can.

The communication plan is designed to help your small group attenders engage with the truths in that week's group time. Below you'll find bite-size content that you can post on your

attenders' social media channels or send through email. There are tweets, posts for Facebook and Instagram, and images that you can use. And they're all designed to help your attenders connect with the week's topic.

Remember to make these posts and tweets yours. Don't feel like you have to use all of the content provided in a given series. Use this plan as a starting point as you leverage social media with your small group.

### TEXT MESSAGES

#### SEND THIS TO EVERYONE IN YOUR GROUP:

Hi! Hope you're having a fruitful week! (See what I did there?) I'm praying that God will help you see how you can live more in step with His Spirit.

#### SEND THIS TO ANYONE WHO MISSED GROUP THIS WEEK:

*(Leader: You can find the audio file in your downloads. Use a service like Google Drive or Dropbox to share it.)*

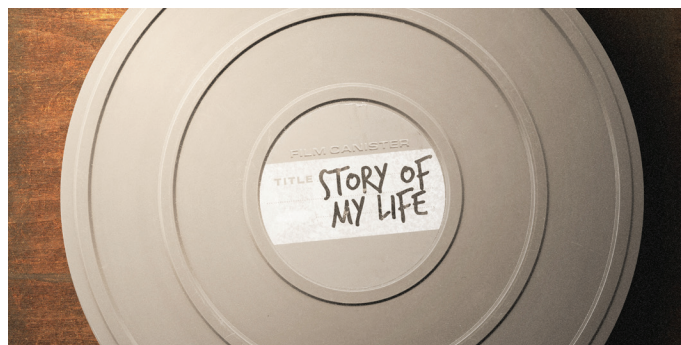
Hey—we missed you at group this week! Here's the link to the audio so you can catch up on the teaching. Can't wait to see you next week—group isn't the same without you!

#### SEND THIS TO ONE OR TWO PEOPLE IN YOUR GROUP, JUST BECAUSE:

Hi! Just checking in. How's your week going? How can I pray for you?

### SOCIAL MEDIA

#### POST THIS TO YOUR FACEBOOK OR INSTAGRAM:

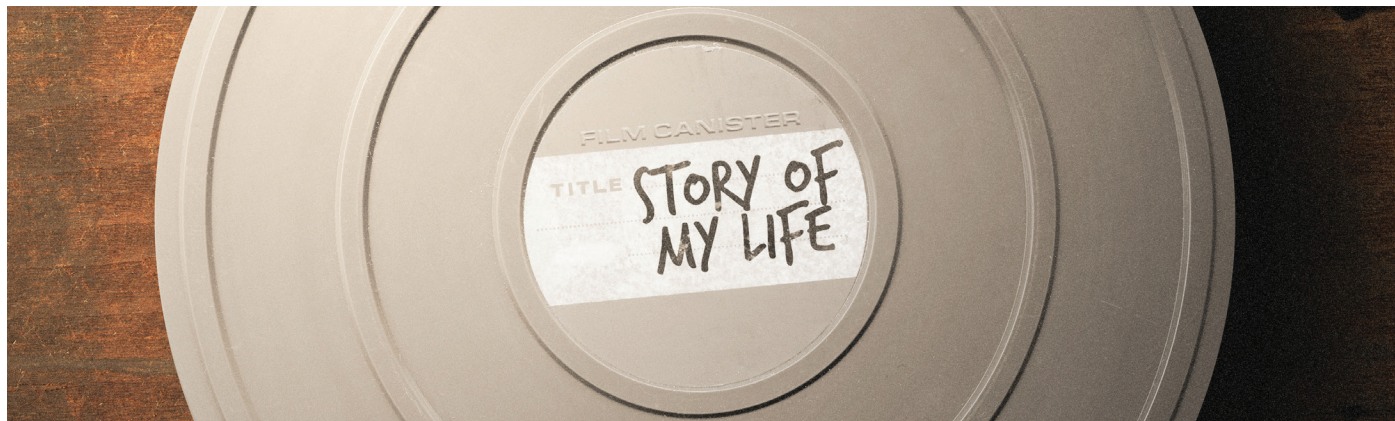


In small group this week, we talked about how God has given us an indicator by which we can check how we're doing faith-wise. Have you been looking out for evidence of God's fruit? Can't wait to talk more next week about God's intentions for us living a better story.



# Weekly Email

## WEEK 5



### FOR THE LEADER

Remember to email your small group every week with a reminder of when small group meets, directions, and any information that would be helpful for them. To make it simple, just **copy and paste the email below** and fill in any information that you think

your group members might need to know. Since every group and leader is different, feel free to change the email text to fit your group.

### WEEK 5 EMAIL

Hey everyone!

Hope you all are having a great week! I wanted to send out a quick email to let everyone know what we'll be talking about in small group this week.

We're in the fifth week of *Story of My Life*. Have you ever wished that there was a "faith indicator"—like a step counter or a calorie tracker—that could tell you how you're doing in your relationship with God? Believe it or not, God gave us one. This week's message is about the standard by which we can measure our lives—God calls it the fruit of His Holy Spirit. We're going to talk in small group this week about the "fruit" our lives are producing. It should be a fruitful time! (Awful pun intended.)

Here are the details for our meeting:

Date/time:

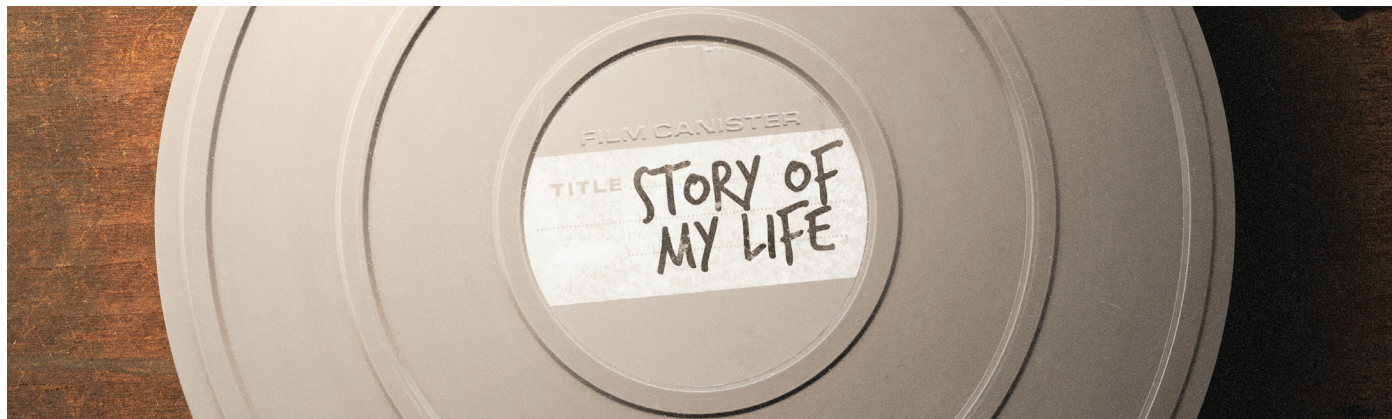
Address:

Our weekly Bible Reading Plan and the questions for this week are attached.

See you guys soon!

# Bible Reading Plan

## WEEK 5



### OVERVIEW

Wouldn't it be awesome if you could help your small group members engage with God's Word all week long, instead of just during your weekly small group time? That's the intention of the Bible Reading Plan that goes along with this series.

Every week of a series comes with five unique verses and five unique prompts to help your small group members think about and engage with Scripture throughout the week. Each Scripture image can be found in the "Graphics" folder of the series download and each prompt can be found below.

### HOW TO USE

We've designed these images and prompts to be flexible enough to use in a wide variety of ways. But to help you get started, here are three things you might want to try:

- 1. POST THEM.** These images and prompts work perfectly on social media!
- 2. TEXT THEM.** If you're looking for a more personal way to encourage your group members to read Scripture, try texting

each day's Scripture and prompt to the group. Of course, we're all busy. So to save time, you may want to sign up for an online texting service and schedule those in advance.

- 3. PRINT OR EMAIL THEM.** An easy way to have your group use the Bible Reading Plan is to simply print or email the next page. That way they have each day's reading before the week begins.

### SCRIPTURE AND DAILY PROMPTS FOR EACH IMAGE

#### MONDAY (Day 1) Galatians 5:22-23

Do you see evidence of God's fruit in your life? For the rest of this week, pick one aspect of the fruit of God's Spirit per day and ask Him to show you how He wants to develop it more.

#### TUESDAY (Day 2) John 15:1-2

It's easy to think that it's our responsibility to bear fruit, but it's not. Today, remind yourself that the fruit of the Spirit is just that—the fruit of God's Holy Spirit. And He is responsible to grow it in you. Your job is just to follow Him.

#### WEDNESDAY (Day 3) Matthew 12:33

What fruit is your life producing? What fruit do people see when

they look at your life? Ask God to help you be rooted more in Him to grow His fruit.

#### THURSDAY (Day 4) John 13:34-35

Do people in your life feel loved by you? Who in your life can you show more love to? Ask God to fill you with His love, so that others may experience His love through you.

#### FRIDAY (Day 5) John 15:8

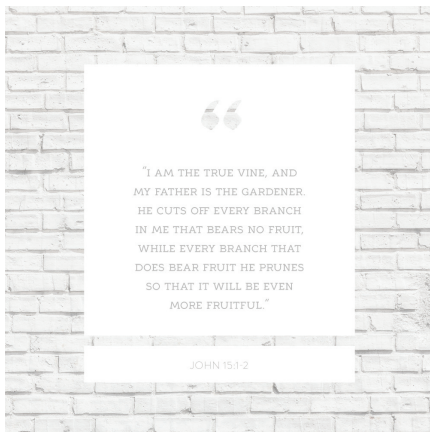
Look back at the list of the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23. Does your life show more of this fruit than it did at the beginning of the week? What can you do to continually be mindful of the fruit you're producing?

# Bible Reading Plan

## WEEK 5



**DAY 1:** Do you see evidence of God's fruit in your life? For the rest of this week, pick one aspect of the fruit of God's Spirit per day and ask Him to show you how He wants to develop it more.



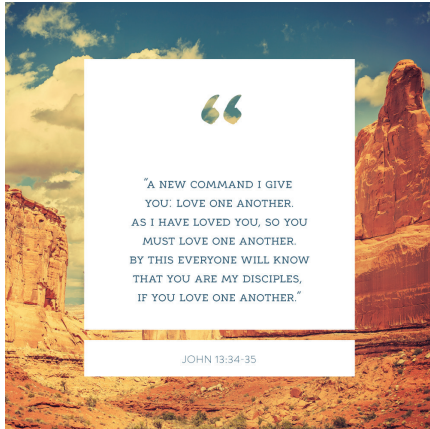
**DAY 2:** It's easy to think that it's our responsibility to bear fruit, but it's not. Today, remind yourself that the fruit of the Spirit is just that—the fruit of God's Holy Spirit. And He is responsible to grow it in you. Your job is just to follow Him.



**DAY 3:** What fruit is your life producing? What fruit do people see when they look at your life? Ask God to help you be rooted more in Him to grow His fruit.

# Bible Reading Plan

## WEEK 5



**DAY 4:** Do people in your life feel loved by you? Who in your life can you show more love to? Ask God to fill you with His love, so that others may experience His love through you.



**DAY 5:** Look back at the list of the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23. Does your life show more of this fruit than it did at the beginning of the week? What can you do to continually be mindful of the fruit you're producing?



# Teaching Script

## Week 5

### BOTTOM LINE

## YOUR STORY IS EITHER MOVING TOWARD LOVE OR AWAY FROM IT.

### INTRODUCTION

Do you remember playing the hot or cold game growing up? In the game, something was hidden and as someone tried to find it, you would say “warmer” or “colder.” If they moved closer to the target, then they were warmer. And the further they moved from the target, the colder they got. It was way better than hide and seek because you actually had an indicator. You knew if you were on the right track.

While we’re all adults now, do you ever wish you had someone who let you know whether you’re warmer or colder on what really matters in life? We still love the idea of having an indicator or a measurement of how we’re doing. Maybe you have one of those wearable devices that tells you how many steps you’ve taken today and how many more you need to take in order to be healthy. Or maybe you just stop by that little blood-pressure measuring machine every time you’re at Walmart. Or maybe you have an app that tracks your spending or your sleeping habits, or how much water you drink, or how much time you spend working. It seems like there’s a way to track and measure almost everything. Even when it’s something I don’t necessarily want to measure (*I’m looking at you, bathroom scales*), it’s like I can’t help myself from looking. I just want to know how I’m doing. Always.

All of that is good, but what about the big stuff? The things that matter most? For example, I wish there was a scale that measured how I’m doing as a spouse. We have arguments every once in a while and we have good moments. But what’s the indicator of normal? How are we doing . . . how am I doing—really? Or what about as a parent? Wouldn’t it be awesome if there were an app or a tracker that just told me how I’m doing? Yes, the kids were fed, clothed, and educated today—so that’s a win. But overall, how am I doing? Am I getting this right? My kids will probably need therapy when they grow up, but how much will they need?

### TENSION

There are a lot of areas like that, right? Areas where we just wish we had a measurement of how we’re doing. And certainly for most of us, one of those areas is our faith.

For the past few weeks we’ve been talking about how everyone wants to have a better life story. This isn’t a Christian thing or a church-goer thing. It’s a human thing. When I talk about the story of my life and you talk about the story of your life, every single one of us wants it to be a good one. And we’ve been talking about how Jesus came to give us a better story—that His goal for us, ultimately, is to have a life-story that is more rich, more full, and often more satisfying than anything we could have hoped for on our own.

And that sounds great. I bet you want a more satisfying life, but how do you know you’re moving toward that? How do you know your story is actually getting better? That you’re making progress? Especially when it comes to faith, you may wonder, “Am I doing it right?”

You may have ideas about what it takes to progress toward the life that Jesus wants for you. Maybe you’ve grown up with the idea that making progress in your faith just means you have a lot of Biblical knowledge. You’ve read your Bible a lot and you’ve memorized verses. Or maybe, for you, it’s always been attached to church attendance. Your motto is: The more you go, the more you know, and the more you grow. And while both of those are great ways to grow spiritually, are they the only indicators of spiritual progress?

Or maybe you tend to think progress is measured by how much or how little sin there is in your life. More sin equals doing badly. Less sin equals doing better. And if you’re honest, that measurement may make you nervous. Because, no matter how



# Teaching Script

## Week 5

long you've been a Christian or how hard you try, one thing is true of all of us: we still sin. We still mess up. Since that's true, does that mean we aren't making any progress at all?

### TRUTH

When it comes to my life story and your life story and the better life that Jesus promised, wouldn't it be great if there was some kind of indicator to let us know we're on the right track?

Well, the good news is that there is. But it's different than what we might think.

In one of the more famous passages in the Bible, the apostle Paul gives us a measurement to know whether or not we're experiencing the full and abundant life Jesus promised. Paul said there are some atypical ways to measure and see how Jesus is showing up in your life.

But first, some background. In the letter where Paul shared this indicator, he was addressing a specific problem the church in Galatia was having. The Jesus-followers there were struggling to understand where all of the laws that God gave fit their new lives as Christians. False teachers had spread the lie that in order to be Christians, they had to follow all of the Jewish laws. The new Christians who were Jews had no problem with that—they had always followed God's laws! But some of the new followers of Jesus weren't Jewish. They didn't know much about all of the laws. And they were feeling quite overwhelmed by being asked to follow them.

So Paul addressed their concerns. He reminded them that God accepts everyone through their faith in Jesus alone—not by how many laws they keep. And then Paul shared the indicator that can show us how we're doing in our faith.

*The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! . . . Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives (Galatians 5:22-23, 25 NLT).*

Paul shared that someone living the full, rich life Jesus promised will develop specific attributes or traits that are unique. And he gets very specific: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*. Paul calls these traits "fruit." If you want to know how a tree is doing, you look at the fruit it's producing. The same is true for us. Our growth, **our progress toward the life that Jesus wants for us, is measured by who we are becoming.**

And while these attributes are external, they don't come from us. They come from God. Just as an apple tree doesn't stress to produce apples, we aren't to work our hardest to produce this fruit. God's Spirit grows it in us. Our only job is to listen and walk with Him. And as we do, we'll find ourselves moving toward the satisfying and full life that Jesus wants for us.

But there's more to our story. Just as we can move toward the full life God wants for us by following Him, there's a force that is constantly pulling us in the other direction. Just a few verses earlier, Paul shared the signs of someone who is moving away from the better story. They are: *sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these (Galatians 5:19-21 NLT)*. These are things that can threaten to steal our better story.

The reality is, we're always moving one direction or the other. We're always moving toward producing good fruit or bad fruit. Fruit that can make our story better or fruit that can hurt us. Fruit that God wants to grow in us, or fruit that He wants us to avoid because of the pain that comes with it. Another way of saying it is this: **we're always moving toward love or away from it.** That whole list really flows out of the first attribute on the list: love. The more you love your neighbor, the more peace you'll have. The more you love your family, the more kindness you'll show. The more you love yourself and your life, the more self-control you'll employ. In the end, it all comes down to love—and your story is either moving toward love or away from it.

So, based on this measurement that Paul gave us, we can to begin to ask ourselves some questions:

Am I becoming more loving or more selfish?

Am I becoming more joyful or more discouraged?

Am I becoming more peaceful or anxious?

Am I becoming more patient with people or more aggravated with them?

Am I becoming more kind in how I treat others or simply more indifferent?

Am I becoming more proactive in doing good for others or am I more interested in doing good for myself?

# Teaching Script

## WEEK 5



Am I becoming more faithful and loyal to friends or more unreliable and undependable?

Am I becoming more gentle with people or more harsh and abrasive?

Am I practicing more self-control or am I becoming more undisciplined?

These are the difficult questions we need to ask ourselves. It's not something that you do once and then you're done. We're in a constant state of drift either towards the better life Jesus offers or away from it. And if we really want to know if we're moving toward a better a story, we have to ask those questions. We have to be brave enough—and self-aware enough—to ask the challenging questions, and answer with what might be sobering answers.

We inquire because Paul told us this is the fruit of those who are following Jesus. *This* is the test. And I love what Paul wrote after listing all these characteristics—that against these things there is no law. In other words, when we're following Jesus, when our lives are producing this type of fruit, when we're living examples of love, joy, and peace, there is no downside. There is no trade-off. It's only good.

And it's good for us to keep in mind that producing fruit in our lives is much like growing fruit or vegetables—it's slow and gradual and takes more time than we anticipate. We don't always see leaps and bounds, but slowly, below the surface, with care and intention, growth happens. The Holy Spirit will see to it. And the better life will abound.

### APPLICATION

When you allow God to grow the fruit of the Spirit in your life from the inside out, you begin to experience the story God wants to write with your life. If you want to know whether you're moving closer to Jesus or further away from Him, just look at your fruit. **Ask yourself whether your life is moving toward love, toward joy, toward peace, or away from it.**

One of the best things we can do when it comes to how we're doing spiritually is to ask some wise friends what they see in our lives. Try it. Ask some friends who know you and who love you if they'd be willing to speak truth to you about what they see. Ask them if they see you growing in love, in patience, and in goodness. Ask them if they see anger issues, or constant frustration or anxiety in your life. Let them know you need their honesty more than you need your feelings not to be hurt. These are the people we need in our lives to encourage us in our story. Sometimes they have a great vantage point to tell us what direction we're moving towards.

If someone sees something in you that's keeping you from living a better story, lean in—even if it's hard. If you notice yourself moving away from a better story, or if someone tells you that you are, do what you need to do to move toward love: pray, talk to some friends, even see a good Christian counselor if you need to. Because the battle for your life is very real.

But the good news is that God, in His Word, makes it crystal clear that your story—specifically your great and abundant and full-life story—is more important to Him than you could imagine. And if you find yourself drifting away, He is always willing to help you find your way back.

### LANDING

Over time, as you surrender more and more of your everyday life to Jesus, the fruit that He produces in you will lead you toward a much better story. Your life will move closer to love, not further away from it.

My prayer is that, as we move toward love, toward joy, toward peace, our families will too. As we move toward patience, toward kindness, toward faithfulness, our kids will too. As we grow into these traits Paul talked about, I pray that they become the markers, the identifiers of Jesus-followers everywhere. That peace and gentleness and self-control become what we're known for—what *He* is known for. Will that happen overnight? No. Will it be slow and gradual? Yes. But that type of growth is powerful and unstoppable. And it will help everyone around us live a better story.