

This lesson series has been prepared for use in

# Home Group Meetings

*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*  
Acts 2:42

## Series 11. *The Fruit of the Spirit*

**Number of lessons: 7**

**Focus of series:**

1. How the qualities described in Galatians 5:22-23 come forth in the life of a believer and what each quality looks like when it is mature.
2. Emphasis on the idea that fruit comes forth over time. We must work at optimizing the conditions for growth, but we must look to God to bring forth the fruit.

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# The Fruit of the Spirit

*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,  
that brings forth its fruit in its season. Psalms 1:3*

**LESSON 1.** This series of lessons will focus on the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22-23. It will examine how these spiritual qualities come forth in the life of a believer and what each quality looks like when it is mature. Review the lesson and read each Scripture passage carefully. Then write one sentence in this space summarizing what you have determined to be the central point of the lesson.

## ***Read Galatians 5:19-23***

In this passage, the fruit of the Spirit is contrasted with the works of the flesh. Whenever we do something that is listed as a work of the flesh, we must understand that this is a human action, arising out of our human nature. We are responsible for these actions and cannot blame them on God or anyone else.

In contrast, the spiritual qualities described as the fruit of the Spirit are the result of the influence of God's Spirit dwelling within us. We cannot take credit for it when these qualities come forth. They have their source in God and are the result of God bringing forth His spiritual nature by overcoming our human nature.

## ***Read Isaiah 32:15-17***

A human being apart from God is like the wilderness. Because of the dryness of his inward man, he cannot produce spiritual fruit, but only works that lead to death. But when the Spirit is poured out upon him, this begins a life-changing process that results in great spiritual fruitfulness.

## ***Read Romans 7:4-6***

Before we were born again, the fruit of all our actions was ultimately death, regardless of how religious or moral our lives may have been. Following the law (which could be any set of religious rules) cannot produce spiritual fruit in our lives. We must die to the law and learn how to live in the newness of the Spirit.

## ***Read Matthew 3:7-12***

Many of the Jews believed that they were children of God simply because they were descendants of Abraham. But John the Baptist informed them that Jesus was about to start raising up true children of God through the New Birth. In this passage, John declared that everyone who claims to be a child of God must have fruit that bears witness to the genuineness of their repentance. He goes on to state that "every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." Bearing spiritual fruit must not be seen as an optional part of salvation. Fruitfulness is a necessity.

## **Discussion Points:**

1. In Matthew 21:18-19, Jesus cursed a fig tree. Why did He do this?

*Jesus cursed the fig tree because it was unfruitful – it had failed to fulfill its purpose, which was to bear fruit.*

2. Read John 15:1-8 and talk about what we learn about fruitfulness from this passage.

*To bear fruit, we must be "in the vine." This means that we must be in a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ.*

*When we bear fruit, we will be pruned so that we will bear more fruit. The word "prune" means that God will cleanse us or purge us of anything that would hinder future fruitfulness. What might you need to be purged of?*

*The Greek word translated "prune" is where we get our English word "katharsis." Does anyone know what this word means? Look it up in a dictionary.*

*When we separate ourselves from Jesus, we lose our ability to bear fruit. What are some ways we can separate ourselves from Jesus? (Prayerlessness, failure to praise, unforgiveness, isolating from the body.)*

*God is glorified when we bear much fruit. Our purpose is to glorify God.*

3. Read Song of Solomon 2:3. In this verse the woman (representing us) is telling her beloved (representing Jesus) that she finds His fruit to be sweet. Read back through the list of the fruit of the Spirit. Do you consider these qualities to be sweet, something to be desired? Or do you see them as nothing all that special?

## The Fruit of the Spirit

*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,  
that brings forth its fruit in its season. Psalms 1:3*

**LESSON 2.** This lesson focuses on what we can learn about developing the fruit of the Spirit by examining how trees bear fruit. Review the lesson and read each Scripture passage carefully. Then write one sentence in this space summarizing what you have determined to be the central point of the lesson.

### ***Read Galatians 5:22-23***

The fruit of the Spirit are the spiritual qualities that come forth in a Christian's life as a result of God's indwelling Spirit. They are character traits of Jesus Christ and represent the character traits that God wants everyone of us to have. But as we learned last week, we cannot produce these qualities apart from the power of God's Spirit working in us.

### ***Read Psalms 92:12-15***

To help us understand how the fruit of the Spirit develops in our lives, God used an example that we can all understand: a tree. We all know that a tree must be planted and must grow for a while before it produces fruit. In this passage, God describes His people as being like a palm tree or a cedar. Let's see what we can learn about fruitfulness by looking at what the Bible says about fruit-bearing trees.

### ***Read Genesis 1:12***

It has been the will of God from the very beginning that every tree intended to bear fruit actually bear fruit. When a tree fails to bear fruit, it has failed to fulfill the purpose for which it was made.

### ***Read Leviticus 19:23-25***

This passage shows us that even God recognized that fruit takes time. Whatever fruit comes forth during the first three years He doesn't even consider to have value. This should help us to be at peace in our spiritual growth. At the same time, we must not be complacent or apathetic about our growth. If we do not eventually bear fruit that God approves of, we risk being cursed by God for our unfruitfulness.

### ***Read Romans 6:19-22***

We learn from this passage that the flesh is weak and cannot transform itself into what God wants us to be. All we can do is present our fleshly members as slaves to a higher power. If we submit to uncleanness and lawlessness, our fruit will lead to death. But if we submit to God, our fruit will lead to holiness, and in the end, everlasting life.

We can see from this passage that God views holiness as something more than simply external appearances. The fruit of the Spirit are the marks of holiness that God wants to stamp upon our character so that we can show forth His nature to the world.

### ***Read Isaiah 61:1-3***

We are the planting of the Lord. When we were born again, He planted us in His garden and provided us with everything we need to become spiritually fruitful. As the fruit of the Spirit comes forth in our lives, God will be glorified, which fulfills our ultimate purpose in life.

### **Discussion Points:**

1. When God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden, He gave Him a very specific job to do. Genesis 2:15 says, "Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it." If the first man's job was to tend and keep the trees in God's garden, what does this tell us about our work as believers?

*That God expects us to help one another develop spiritually. We do not grow in isolation.*

2. After the first man sinned, God told him, "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread" (Genesis 3:17-19). This means that the curse God put on man was that nothing good would come out of the ground without cultivation. What does this mean to us spiritually?

*The fruit of the Spirit will not just come forth. We must do the hard work of cultivating our hearts.*

## The Fruit of the Spirit

*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,  
that brings forth its fruit in its season. Psalms 1:3*

**LESSON 3.** This lesson focuses on the part that each of us must play if we want to develop spiritual fruit. Review the lesson and read each Scripture passage carefully. Then write one sentence in this space summarizing what you have determined to be the central point of the lesson.

### ***Read Galatians 5:22-23***

The simple fact that we have received the Holy Spirit does not mean we will automatically be spiritually fruitful. We play a part in the growth process. Let's look at what we must do if we are to be spiritually fruitful.

### ***Read Leviticus 26:4; 26:18-20***

These verses tell us that if we will walk in the ways of God and do what He tells us to do, He will make us fruitful. This means that we must be committed to learning the Word of God and living in the ways that please the Lord.

### ***Read Psalms 1:1-6***

This passage tells us that we must not form close associations with unbelievers and that we must be devoted to God's Word. We must take delight in learning the Word and we must keep our minds filled with it. Paul wrote, "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" and "Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly" (Colossians 3:2; 3:16).

### ***Read Jeremiah 17:5-8***

This passage tells us that we must not trust in our human intelligence or abilities but in the Lord, putting our hope in Him. It is not always easy to trust in a God we cannot see, and we often have a tendency to fall back on our human capabilities. But David said, "Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalms 37:5). As we learn to trust in Jesus completely, He promised that we will be like a fruitful tree.

Both Psalms 1 and Jeremiah 17 refer to the fruitful tree being one

that is planted by a river of water. This water source is Jesus and the water is His Spirit. Without an ongoing supply of this Living Water, we cannot be spiritually fruitful.

### ***Read Luke 6:43-45***

These verses tell us that the kind of tree we are will determine the kind of fruit we produce. This is an absolute spiritual law. We cannot get around it. The only way to change the nature of the fruit is to change the nature of the tree.

### ***Read Luke 8:4-8***

In the parable of the sower, Jesus described four different kinds of ground. Only the fourth type, the good ground, brought forth the desired fruit. In Luke 8:11 He explained that the seed is the Word of God. He then went on to explain that the ground represented different conditions of the human heart. The good ground is a "noble and good heart" that keeps the Word and bears fruit with patience (Luke 8:15). This refers to a person who is humble and honest. Regardless what kind of heart you presently have, you can choose to be humble and you can choose to be honest. No one can stop you from becoming good ground except you!

### **Discussion Points:**

1. We have seen in this lesson that it is possible to bear either good fruit or bad fruit. The good fruit is the fruit of the Spirit and the bad fruit is the works of the flesh. Review what we must do if we are to bear the good fruit of the Spirit.

*Live according to God's ways.*

*Don't form close associations with unbelievers.*

*Fill our minds with God's Word through study and meditation.*

*Trust God completely in all situations.*

*Be humble and honest.*

2. Read Galatians 5:16-18. How is "walking in the Spirit" related to doing the points we have just reviewed?

*The Spirit will always lead us to live according to God's ways. The points we reviewed simply describe what it looks like to walk in the Spirit.*

## The Fruit of the Spirit

*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,  
that brings forth its fruit in its season. Psalms 1:3*

**LESSON 4.** This lesson focuses on how spiritual fruit is actually produced and how we can be sure that we are producing the right kind of fruit. Review the lesson and read each Scripture passage carefully. Then write one sentence in this space summarizing what you have determined to be the central point of the lesson.

### **Read James 1:14-15**

These verses describe the development of sin as being like conception and childbirth. A tempting idea entering the mind and being accepted and embraced is like a seed entering the egg. Once this happens, lust has conceived and I become captivated by it. It may be embryonic lust in the beginning, but it is there. And if left alone, like a fetus it will continue to grow.

After lust has been indulged and has developed over time, eventually it gives birth to sin, which means I have now acted on what I have been lusting after. Now I have committed a work of the flesh, an action with its source in our humanity. And a life of continuing sin will ultimately lead to death. As Paul wrote, “Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21).

The birth process is similar to the planting process. A seed must be planted in the ground. If it germinates, it eventually sprouts as a young plant. In time it brings forth fruit.

### **Read James 1:21**

To have the fruit of the Spirit come forth in our lives, we must have the right seed planted in the right kind of heart. As we learned in the Parable of the Sower, the right seed is the Word of God and the right kind of heart is one that is humble and honest. This is why James tells us that instead of receiving a tempting idea into our heart which only produces lust and the fruit of sin, we should receive with meekness the Word of God into our hearts. When we fill our hearts with God’s ideas, they will produce the fruit of His Spirit.

This means that to have the fruit of the Spirit, we must commit ourselves to the right seed.

### **Read Galatians 5:16-18**

The desires of God’s Spirit and the desires of our flesh are contrary to each other. Every time a circumstance arises, we must decide which we will yield to. This is where the hard work comes in. This is where we must be diligent at cultivating the soil of our heart.

Here is an example. One quality of the fruit of the Spirit is longsuffering. This is the opposite of being quick tempered or hot headed. It means that you do not lose your temper quickly and do not react with outbursts of anger. Now suppose one of your children disturbs you by hitting his brother while you are focused on an important project. The first response for many people would be to lash out in anger. In fact, this would be a common human response. But the fact that it is human means that it is the desire of the flesh. The desire of the Spirit would be to react without an outburst of anger. To be longsuffering.

You can see from this example what the Bible means when it says that the Spirit and the flesh are contrary to one another. We can’t have it both ways. So in each situation we must decide which idea we will yield to. The flesh says, “Lash out.” The Spirit says, “Remain calm.”

### **Read Matthew 16:24**

To deny yourself means to reject what self is demanding. It is another way of saying that we must not yield to the desires of the flesh. Instead we are told to take up our cross and follow Jesus. This means that we must put the desires of our flesh to death and seek to be led by the Spirit. Galatians 5:24 says, “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” We must all strive diligently for this mastery of the Spirit over our human passions and desires.

### **Discussion Points:**

Lead the group in a discussion of this whole process of developing spiritual fruit. Ask members to talk about their own struggles to deny the desires of the flesh. Ask them to discuss practical ways in which they can help each other to grow and become fruitful. Discuss how they can improve the conditions of their hearts and how they can do a better job of planting the right seed.

## The Fruit of the Spirit

*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,  
that brings forth its fruit in its season. Psalms 1:3*

**LESSON 5.** This lesson focuses on the first three qualities of the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, and peace. Review the lesson and read each Scripture passage carefully. Then write one sentence in this space summarizing what you have determined to be the central point of the lesson.

### **LOVE: Read Galatians 5:22-23**

Love is one of the most misunderstood concepts in the Bible. Many people think of it only in terms of romantic love. But the kind of love the Spirit brings forth has little to do with romance. It is not a love of feelings but rather a love of choice and action. Jesus loved us, not because we were so wonderful that He just couldn't help being filled with warm feelings of affection for us; He loved us because He chose to. He saw we were in need and decided to love us by coming into the world as a man and suffering on the cross.

Our flesh wants us to be selfish and focused mostly on ourselves. The Spirit wants us to love, which means developing a lifestyle centered on sacrificial acts of kindness done for the benefit of others. Love is an attitude that says, "I care about you, and I am willing for your well-being to cost me something."

### **Read Mark 12:29-31**

Who does God expect us to love? First of all Him. We are to love Him by being devoted to Him, by praising Him, and by faithfully keeping His Word. Second, we are to love other people (our neighbors). This would include everyone around us: family members, friends, co-workers, people in the community, or anyone else whose path we cross.

### **Read Matthew 5:43-48**

We are not to limit our love to only those we like or those who treat us well. We are to love even our enemies. This means that we must be willing to do good to all people to whatever degree they will allow us. Some people will not receive our love, but this does not mean we can be

unwilling to offer them love.

### **JOY: Read John 16:20-24**

Jesus gives us the kind of joy that enables us to endure the worst kinds of situations without falling into depression. The fullness of joy becomes ours when we reach the place where we know that God hears our every prayer, even though He may not respond immediately.

### **Read Colossians 1:10-12**

True strength and spiritual maturity is the ability to endure difficult trials with patience (without getting all anxious), longsuffering (without losing your cool), and joy (without getting depressed and discouraged).

### **Read 1 Peter 1:6-9**

No matter how rough life may get, we have something to look forward to: the coming of the Lord. This ought to fill our hearts with a level of joy the world cannot understand.

### **PEACE: Read John 14:27**

The peace the Spirit gives is different from the kind of peace the world gives. The world's peace is temporary and depends on circumstances. God's peace abides within and lasts forever. It comes directly from heaven.

### **Read Philippians 4:6-7**

We do not need to be anxious about anything. We simply need to make prayer a priority in every situation. When we do, God's peace will keep our hearts and minds free from anxiety.

### **Discussion Points:**

1. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and talk about what the opposite of each of these traits of love might look like.

*For example, if love is kind, the opposite would be harsh and mean. Anyone who is harsh and mean is showing a lack of genuine love.*

2. Read Nehemiah 8:10 and talk about how having the Lord's joy in us can strengthen us. Let each member tell about a time when they were surprised by how much inward peace they had when facing a difficult or dangerous situation.

## The Fruit of the Spirit

*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,  
that brings forth its fruit in its season. Psalms 1:3*

**LESSON 6.** This lesson focuses on the next three qualities of the fruit of the Spirit: longsuffering, kindness, goodness. Review the lesson and read each Scripture passage carefully. Then write one sentence in this space summarizing what you have determined to be the central point of the lesson.

### **LONGSUFFERING: *Read 2 Peter 3:9***

The basic meaning of “longsuffering” is slow to anger. It is the opposite of being a hot-head or quick tempered. Thankfully this is an attribute of God’s character. It takes a lot to set Him off!

### ***Read Proverbs 25:28 and Ephesians 4:26-27***

When we fail to keep ourselves under control, we become vulnerable to the power of Satan. He takes advantage of emotional outbursts. It is important to differentiate between becoming angry and losing your temper. Anger is a godly emotion and is many times the appropriate response. But we are not to allow ourselves to be overcome by our anger. This is when anger becomes sin.

### ***Read Proverbs 29:11***

Some people think we should just express our anger however it happens to come out. The Bible calls those who do this fools. Christians are to be self-controlled, not out-of-control.

### ***Read Ephesians 4:31 and Colossians 3:12-13***

It is clear from these verses that we must no longer be willing to allow anger to dominate us but must instead yield to the Holy Spirit, which will always bring forth the fruit of longsuffering.

### **KINDNESS: *Read Titus 3:4-5***

The Greek word translated “kindness” comes from the same root as the word Christ. Perhaps this means that kindness is the greatest attribute of Jesus Christ. According to this verse, it was because of His kindness

that God brought us salvation. Isn’t it good to know that God is kind!

### ***Read Ephesians 4:32***

We should model our kindness after the Lord’s. Just as He forgave us, we ought to forgive those who trespass against us. This is the fruit of the Spirit.

### **GOODNESS: *Read Romans 2:4***

Goodness can be understood by contrasting it with evil. The core meaning of evil is “that which harms or damages.” Goodness is therefore that which blesses and benefits. This verse tells us that the fact that God is good and wishes to bless us should inspire us to repent. It is not the threat of His wrath that should inspire repentance, but His goodness.

### ***Read Romans 11:22***

God is good toward those who walk in faith, but He is also severe with those who turn away. We must not interpret God’s goodness as a license for compromise, half-heartedness, or sin.

### ***Read Romans 15:14***

As God’s children, our Father expects us to show others the same kind of goodness that He has shown us.

### **Discussion Points:**

1. Describe a circumstance when anger would be the correct emotional response.
2. Tell about a time when you gave place to the devil by losing your temper and the result was serious damage to a relationship. How could you have reacted differently?
3. Some people say they have a hard time forgiving. But isn’t this really saying that they have a hard time being kind (see Ephesians 4:32)? Why is it that no one is willing to say they are having a struggle with being a kind person?
4. Is there anyone that you need to show kindness to right now by offering forgiveness?
5. From a biblical perspective, a good person is one whose only desire is to bless and benefit others, never to harm them. Are you this kind of person?

# The Fruit of the Spirit

*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,  
that brings forth its fruit in its season. Psalms 1:3*

**LESSON 7.** This lesson focuses on the last three qualities of the fruit of the Spirit: faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Review the lesson and read each Scripture passage carefully. Then write one sentence in this space summarizing what you have determined to be the central point of the lesson.

## **FAITHFULNESS: Read Psalms 92:1-2**

The word translated “faithfulness” can mean constancy or fidelity. When it comes to our relationship with God, He is always faithful. This means that we can rely on Him to stay in relationship with us and always do what is in our long-term best interests. We can count on Him!

## **Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 and 1 John 1:9**

Because of His faithfulness, God helps us when we face temptation and forgives us when we confess our sins. He does not do this because of our faithfulness to Him, but because of His faithfulness to us. It is important to Him that our relationship with Him endures for eternity.

## **Read 2 Timothy 2:13**

Even when we are unfaithful to God, He remains faithful to us. And He wants us to have this same kind of constancy and fidelity in our relationships. The Holy Spirit will always encourage us to be faithful to our families and friends, even when they are unfaithful to us.

## **GENTLENESS: Read Matthew 11:29**

In this verse, Jesus described Himself as gentle. Gentleness should not be thought of as weakness but rather as controlled strength. We handle things with gentleness when we see them as fragile and valuable. To be gentle means to be careful and considerate. We can come to Jesus because we have been assured that He will be gentle with us.

## **Read Galatians 6:1 and Ephesians 4:1-4**

We should be gentle with one another because we are all members of

one body. If you had a broken arm, you would handle it gently so as not to further injure it or cause yourself unnecessary pain. In the same way, when a member of the body of Christ has been broken by sin or moral failure, we must restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.

## **Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8**

Paul demonstrated his true care for other people by being gentle among them. The Holy Spirit will always lead us toward showing a gentle spirit.

## **SELF-CONTROL: Read Acts 24:25**

The word translated “self-control” means to have inward strength. It is the ability to control by your own conscious decision how you will react or respond to a given stimulation. When speaking to Felix, Paul connected self-control with righteousness and the judgment to come. It is one thing to know what is right and proper; it is something else to do it. When the final judgment comes, it will not be based on what we knew, but what we actually did with that knowledge. To know what to do and fail to do it is self-deception. We all need enough inward strength to do what is righteous and good.

## **Read Romans 8:13-14**

God has given us His Spirit to empower us within. We must work diligently at yielding to the Spirit and refusing to yield to our vast array of human impulses, passions and desires.

## **Read 1 Corinthians 9:5-27 (temperate means self-controlled)**

How many of us will reach the end of our lives only to look back and realize how little we accomplished because we never brought our flesh under subjection to the Spirit of God. God has given us the power to control ourselves, but we must yield to that power.

## **Discussion Points:**

1. Review the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23. Ask group members to describe briefly what each spiritual quality looks like in practical application. Give each member a copy of the *Fruit of the Spirit Assessment* form.
2. Discuss areas where members have deficiencies and what they can do to grow in these areas. Review the *Overcoming Areas of Immaturity by Deliberate Spiritual Growth* form and have members fill theirs out.



# Fruit of the Spirit Assessment

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).*

Characteristics of Fruit from Galatians 5:22-23	never	rarely	sometimes	often	always
1. Love: I care enough about others to sacrifice for them.	1	2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9	10
2. Joy: I rejoice in the Lord even when life is not going well.	1	2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9	10
3. Peace: My spirit is calm; I am free from anxiety.	1	2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9	10
4. Longsuffering: I keep my temper under control.	1	2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9	10
5. Kindness: I am kind to others, including my family.	1	2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9	10
6. Goodness: I do good things for other people.	1	2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9	10
7. Faithfulness: I am conscientious and reliable.	1	2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9	10
8. Gentleness: I am careful not to harm those around me.	1	2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9	10
9. Self-control: I am disciplined and not self-indulgent.	1	2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9	10

*“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11).*

# Overcoming Areas of Immaturity by Deliberate Spiritual Growth

## 1. IDENTIFY YOUR AREAS OF IMMATURITY.

Consider the evaluations of your spouse, the other PAC members, other people, and your own self-evaluation.

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## 2. ESTABLISH YOUR OBJECTIVES.

Determine your specific growth objectives and how you will determine whether or not they have been accomplished.

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## 3. PLAN YOUR GROWTH STRATEGY.

Determine what content you will use (books, tapes, seminars, personal interactions, etc.)

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Determine your time frame for processing these materials.

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Determine what accountability you will have during the growth process.

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