

THE FRUIT OF LOVE

1 John 4:7-16

Introduction

1. God is at work in our lives. In fact, when we trusted Christ, God immediately gave us His Holy Spirit to live inside of us. What is God up to? What is He trying to accomplish in us? What is His Spirit trying desperately to do **in us**?
2. What would God like to see happen in our lives? Perfect church attendance? Read our Bible every day? Pray an hour a day? There is nothing wrong with any of those things. They are great things!
3. But when God is alive and working in us, there is definite fruit that shows up in our daily lives. It is called the fruit of the Spirit. **Galatians 5:22-23**
4. I love this metaphor He uses of fruit. If a tree is alive, it bears fruit. Fruit is what you get when a tree has life within it.
5. Paul is saying that this is what it looks like when God Himself is alive and at work in a person's everyday, ordinary, human life. The life of God (His Spirit) will bear fruit in the tree of a person's life, simply because this is what Christ is like, and this is what the Spirit of Christ produces.
6. The Spirit of God wants to make us more and more like Christ. This fruit is a description of Jesus Christ. This is what it looks like. This is the harvest God wants you to reap daily!

It is called the fruit of the Spirit

1. Notice that "fruit" is singular, not plural. Maybe you have called it the "fruits" of the Spirit (we probably all have), but it is the **"fruit"** of the Spirit. Why is it singular?
2. Here is why. When the Holy Spirit is working in our lives, as a whole, this is what you get. It's not the idea that the Holy Spirit may bear the fruit of love in one person, but the fruit of peace in another.
3. Rather than viewing these as nine **separate** fruits, we need to view them as a whole. They are all tied together, and they can all be manifested **at the same time** as we yield to the Holy Spirit and allow Christ to live His life through us.

4. This is the character or fruit that He produces in and through us. Notice, this fruit doesn't focus on what kind of performance we can **achieve**, but what kind of person we **are**.

Top of the list - love

1. This isn't surprising, is it? Paul said the entire Old Testament law is summed up in one word - love. **Galatians 5:14**
2. In putting love first, Paul is reiterating what Jesus taught. **Matthew 22:37-30**
3. Loving God is easier than loving your neighbor! God is perfect, but people aren't! That is why the fruit of the Spirit is love...
4. God wants to make you a loving person, not just towards those that love **you** and people **you** like. He wants you to be loving towards people you don't like and don't agree with, people that irritate you and rub you wrong.
5. He wants to create a love in us that crosses all cultural and racial barriers. A love that brings people together when they might otherwise hate or hurt each other.
6. God has been working in you since your salvation to make you a loving person. If you allow Him to work, and you are yielding to Him, the first thing that shows up is love! You begin to grow in love - a deep, Christ-like love. **1 Thessalonians 4:9-10**
 - We are taught of God to love. This lets us know that true love is divine. So much of what masquerades as love is not true love. Sometimes it is lust, permissiveness, or religious activity, but it's not love.
7. Paul said that you could talk religiously, do religious deeds, do great charitable actions, or self-sacrificial actions and not have true divine love.
8. Jesus said to *"love others as I have loved you."* And by this, everyone will know that you are my disciples. **John 13:34-35**
9. The apostle John said so much about love in the gospel of John, but also in the book of 1 John. Five times he reminds us that this is God's command, and he goes into detail about **how** we should love one another, not just in words, but in action and truth. **1 John 3:11, 17-18, 23; 4:7-12**
10. We can break this down into three simple, but profound truths.

God wants to
make you a
loving person

God loved us

1. Verse 8 proclaims that God is love. That's not all He is. He isn't one dimensional any more than we are. God is also just, righteous, merciful, holy, etc. That means that His love is tempered by all of His other character traits.
2. But God personifies love. God is love. It is a **personal** love (vs. 9 - the love of God was revealed to **us**). A holy, righteous and perfect God loves us with a personal love.
3. God's love is also an **active** love (vs. 9 - God sent; vs. 10 - God loved us and **sent** His Son).
4. God didn't just **say** He loved us, but He expressed His love in deed or action. The greatest expression of love ever displayed was God giving His Son that we could live.
5. God's love for us was not prompted by our love for Him (vs. 10). He initiated this love relationship by loving **first**.
6. This should motivate us to love one another. What is our tendency? It is to love those that love us first. But true love is active, aggressive, and initiates itself first. It doesn't sit idle waiting to be prompted by something. Vs. 11
7. The truth that God loved us should motivate us to love others. How sweet it is when believers begin to understand God's love and we don't do things simply out of a sense of duty, but we love others and do good to each other out of a deep appreciation of God's love for us.
8. How are you doing with this thing of love? It is the fruit or evidence that God is at work in your heart and life.
9. When God works in us, we let go of the things that poison our spirit and sour our attitude - malice, bitterness, unforgiveness, anger, resentment... and we begin to love like Jesus. We love, not just the lovely, but the unlovely. **John 13:34-35**



How does God's love for you impact the way you love others?



What does love look like in action?



How can you show love in a real, tangible way this week?

We know God

1. Knowing God and loving people go hand in hand. Look at verses 7-8. Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
 - So if God **is** love, and we know God, that should equal us loving others.
2. What does the Bible mean when it talks about knowing God? Does it mean that we have an intellectual understanding of God? Does it mean knowing **about** God? That is not what John is talking about here in this text (most people believe in a God, but they don't know Him).
3. When John talks about knowing God, it carries with it the idea of a deep relationship and an intimate union. We **know** God!
 - I think about John and Jesus. Many people knew of Christ, but John really **knew** Jesus. He was comfortable enough that at the last supper, he was leaning up against Jesus' chest, like a child with his mom or dad.
4. Many people don't have that personal relationship with God. They know Him in their head, but it's never gotten into their heart.

5. **If we know God, it means we have been born of God. vs. 7**

- What does that mean? Something has happened within us (being born speaks of new life). We are no longer dead in our sins (dead inside) but we are alive (life of God)! We have become partakers of His Divine nature. We have become part of His family.
- James said that the devils believe in God and tremble. Believing in God and knowing God are two completely different things.
- If we know God and are born of God, this relationship **should** affect us. We exhibit His nature that lives inside of us, and we become like God. And God is love!
- God's nature is to love, and a person who knows God and has been born of God will respond to God's nature of love. It is not something forced or manufactured or fake and worked up, but a natural response.
- People don't necessarily see us and say, "Wow! What love." It is something that flows naturally from us because we know God and are born of God and partakers of His nature. God is love, therefore we love because we know God.

6. **And if we know God, it also means our sins have been forgiven.**

- Vs. 10 - Wow! This is amazing. In religious systems, people are expected to do something to appease God and obtain some type of forgiveness. But the truth of Scripture is that we didn't love God, but He loved us, and Christ became an atoning sacrifice for our sins. **He did something** whereby we could be forgiven of our sins.
- That kind of divine love and forgiveness should lead us to forgive and love others. Vs. 11 cf. **Ephesians 4:32**

God dwells in us

1. God has loved us and saved us (we know God), but here is the amazing part. God has come to dwell **in us**. He didn't have to do that, but He has!

1 Corinthians 3:16

- Genesis - God walked with man.
- Exodus thru the cross - God did not simply walk with man, He dwelt among them (in the camp - tabernacle or temple).
- Now, since the cross, God actually takes up residence in the bodies of His children. He dwells **in us**. Vs. 12-16

2. Jesus came to the earth to reveal God's love to the world. But He's not here in the flesh any more. Then how does God reveal Himself and His love to the world? He reveals Himself through the lives of His children! We are born of God, and He's in us.
3. When **we** love, we reveal **God's** love to a **needy** world. Vs. 12
4. We are channels for His love to flow through. Men can't see God (vs. 12a) but they see His love as we reach out in love and compassion to help those in need.
5. Do you believe God loves sinners? We are His billboard (we are His kids) that demonstrates that truth through our lives and how we love.
6. Jesus didn't simply talk about the love of God. He demonstrated it by giving Himself on the cross. He expects His children to do likewise. When we do love others, it's proof that we know God, and God truly lives **in** us (vs. 16).

In Conclusion

1. As we said at the beginning of this lesson, when God is alive and working in us, there is definite fruit that shows up in our daily lives. It is called the fruit of the Spirit.
Galatians 5:22-23
2. The first thing listed is love. Paul is saying that this is what it looks like when God Himself is alive and at work in a person's everyday, ordinary, human life. The life of God (His Spirit) will bear the fruit of love in the tree of a person's life, simply because this is what Christ is like, and this is what the Spirit of Christ produces.
3. The Spirit of God wants to make us more and more like **Christ**. This fruit is a description of Jesus Christ. This is what it looks like. This is the harvest God wants you to reap daily!

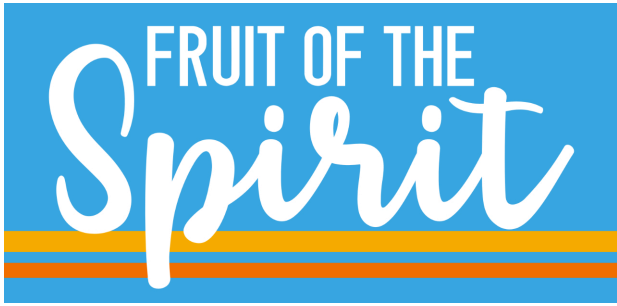
Read John 13:34-35. Jesus said that people will know we are His disciples by our love for others. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?



Now read John 15:9-13. What does verse 13 indicate is the strongest way to show that you love someone?



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THE FRUIT OF JOY

John 15:11 & 17:13

Introduction

1. God is at work in our lives. When you trusted Christ, God immediately sent His Holy Spirit to live inside of you. What is God up to? What is He trying to accomplish in us? What is His Spirit trying desperately to do in us?
2. When God is alive and working in us, there is definite fruit that shows up in our daily lives. It is called the fruit of the Spirit. **Galatians 5:22-23**
 - Fruit is what you get when a tree has life within it.
3. Paul is saying that this is what it looks like when God is living and working within you. The life of God (His Spirit) will bear fruit.
4. This fruit is a description of Jesus Christ. This is what it looks like when Christ is in control. This is the harvest God wants you to reap daily! Imagine what this would do in your marriage if this fruit was regularly showing up (or your home - or at work - or your friendships).
5. The first fruit is "love." But now let's look at the next one - joy! What a precious commodity! So many people are looking for joy, but it eludes them. Why?
 - Joy can't be manufactured (you can't work it up).
 - Joy can't be bought (it is not for sale).
 - Joy is not based on outward circumstances (this is why people can have new and nice everything and still be miserable).
6. Joy can only be found in the right place and in the right way. If not, a person will not experience a consistent, inward joy.
7. We need to all understand that joy is part of our birthright as a child of God. Jesus was very clear about this when He talked to His followers. **John 15:11, 17:13**
8. What do we learn from Jesus in these verses about this precious fruit of joy?

Joy is something internal

1. Notice that this is emphasized in both passages. Jesus said:
 - "...that my joy may remain **in you**." **John 15:11**
 - "...that they may have my joy fulfilled **in themselves**." **John 17:13**
2. Like we said, joy cannot be found in outward circumstances. It has to be found within. Jesus talked about a joy that **no man** can take away from you.
3. That's because no matter what happens outwardly, we can still have a deep, rich joy within our hearts. Why? Because it's not based on outward circumstances or people (they constantly change). It is based on Christ. That brings us to the next point.

Joy is rooted in and centered on Christ

1. Notice that Jesus said **my joy** will remain in you. **My joy** will be fulfilled in you. It is not something that **you** work up and manufacture on your own. It is Christ's joy fulfilled in you.
2. True joy can only be found in Christ. You may have a happy day, happy moment, or happy memory, but sustained, inward joy can only be found in Christ. A joy, not just in triumph, but even through tragedy.
3. Where is that kind of joy rooted? **Romans 5:8-11**
 - Notice that we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 11). Why?
 - Joy comes through an understanding and appreciation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we understand the gospel, we understand God's deep love for us and the lengths that God has gone to in order to demonstrate that love, and to have a relationship with us.
 - We were sinners but Christ died for us; we were enemies of God, but now we are reconciled; we deserve death and wrath, but we have been saved by His life. All of these things are true because of Jesus. Now I have a joy rooted in something! Look at vs. 11 again.
4. If you are struggling in this area of your life (depressed, negative, pessimistic, unhappy most of the time), ask yourself, "Am I seeking Christ? Am I yielding to Christ daily? Am I finding my joy in Him?"

True joy can
only be found
in Christ

Joy can be consistent

1. Notice that Jesus said that it was possible to have a joy that **remained** in you. Not a joy that comes and goes. Some people are like a roller coaster. They are up and down all the time. Jesus said that we don't have to be this way.
2. How can this be? God gave us His Spirit and He longs to fill us with joy.
Romans 14:17, 15:13
 - Instead of a roller coaster you are more like the Skyliner ride at Disney. It is straight, consistent, stable, and living above the circumstances.
3. Did you know that a steady joy is one of the primary evidences that God's kingdom is ruling your heart?
4. One of the shortest verses in the Bible is, "*Rejoice always.*" **1 Thessalonians 5:16**
 - This means to be joyful all the time.
5. Is this really possible? Is a Christian never to cry or feel emotions of sorrow and pain? Of course not - Jesus Himself wept and felt pain and anguish.
6. But a Christian is very unique in that we have God's Spirit and so we can be sorrowful, but also rejoicing at the same time. **2 Corinthians 6:9-10**
7. Have you ever experienced this? Your flesh was sorrowful, but your spirit was rejoicing. Only a Christian can truly understand this (1:6). Cf. **2 Corinthians 7:4, Colossians 1:24**
8. It comes from two things:
 - A knowledge of all the spiritual blessings you possess in Christ.
 - A strong faith, trust, and confidence that our suffering will turn to eventual glory in eternity. **Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18**

Joy can be overflowing

1. Notice that Jesus said that He didn't want to just give us joy, but a full and overflowing joy! Peter called it "*joy unspeakable and full of glory.*"
2. Have you ever had some delicious food at a restaurant, but there wasn't enough of it? Frustrating!
3. Jesus doesn't skimp when He gives us His joy! It is overflowing! It's like a buffet - take all you can stand!

Joy is a decision

1. Joy doesn't come because you are rich, lucky, or life is perfect. It is a decision.
2. Jesus said, *"I have spoken these things to you that my joy might be full in you."* Then He reminded them of what He had told them. Vs. 12
3. The idea of this passage is that joy is found when you make a decision to truly love. This matches the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. The first two listed are love and then joy.
4. Joy is found in loving **people** and serving **people** and sacrificing for others (John 15:13), while Christ fills us with His Spirit.
5. Living a selfish and self-centered life leads to depression.
6. You want joy? Live an unselfish life for others.
7. A great source of Paul's joy was the people that he had impacted for Jesus Christ.
Philippians 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, 3:9
8. This is why it is so important to stay connected with your church, your small group, and with people in general. Without it, how can you truly love? And without love, you can't have joy.
9. God's plan is for you to love - love God and love people. Love leads to the joy that Jesus talked about. What wonderful fruit!

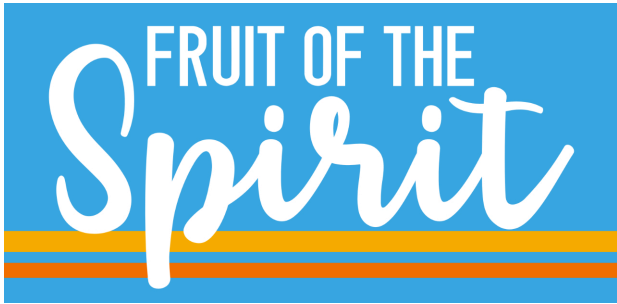
Read Hebrews 12:1-2. In this passage, it says that Jesus endured the shame of the cross. What helped Him do this?



Based on Hebrews 12:1-2, what can help us endure pain and suffering in our own lives?



Romans 8:18 says that the suffering in this world can't even come close to the glory we'll experience in the future. Take some time to pray and thank God for His gift of eternal life.



THE FRUIT OF PEACE

John 14:27 & 16:33

Introduction

1. Many people's lives and hearts are in a state of unrest on a regular basis.
 - And then this carries over into our relationships at home, at work, and every place else.
2. You look at the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 and so much of that list stands in stark contrast to the fruit of peace, doesn't it? Hatred, strife, jealousy, rage (uncontrolled anger), dissensions... These things are so toxic.
 - They will destroy peace - in your marriage, your home, at work, at church, and most of all, internally (like an internal wrecking ball).
3. But Galatians 5:22 says that the fruit of the Spirit is peace. God has called us to a life of peace. He is called the God of peace.
4. There are three dimensions to the peace God offers to us through Christ.
 - Peace with God - this happens the moment you trust Christ.
 - Peace with others - this depends on you, but also on others.
 - Peace internally (with yourself) - **you** are in control of this. Why? Because Jesus said that it is available for His followers. Look at **John 14:27, 16:33**.

Peace is promised

1. Clearly, Jesus promised peace to His followers (John 14:27, 16:33). Jesus is the Prince of Peace and promised us that we could have peace.
2. Notice that Jesus promised to **leave** us His peace and **give** us His peace. Jesus will not lie and will not take back what He has promised. It is there for the taking. It is a gift from Jesus to us.

3. The apostle Paul reiterated this promise in Philippians 4:6-7. Notice it says that the peace of God **will protect** your heart and mind. That sounds like a promise.
 - God promised us a peace that surpasses all understanding. In other words, it is difficult to even explain it or rationalize it.
4. Jesus alludes to this when He says that it is a peace not as the world gives. So there must be a **false** peace that the world **can** give people.
5. People can do wrong and “have peace” about it, but it doesn’t come from God and that kind of peace will not endure (won’t last). It leads to destruction.
6. The peace that Jesus gives is supernatural and it comes from His Spirit within our hearts. That is why it is called the fruit **of the Spirit**. That brings us to our next point.

Peace is found in Christ

1. Notice in John 16:33 Jesus said, *“I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace.”* Jesus tells you clearly where to find peace!
2. He should know - look at the peace He exhibited on the cross when taking His final breaths. He had been treated so unfairly and so brutally, yet we see in Him a heart of forgiveness and love and concern for others. We see a total peace.
3. That inward peace of heart is elusive for so many people, and the reason is simple - they are looking in all the wrong places. Jesus said that the world can’t give it, which means it can’t be bought or purchased through the acquisition of things (a vacation won’t bring a lasting peace, new car, bigger house, etc.).
4. You will not find a true, lasting peace outside of Jesus Christ.
 - Paul said, *“For He (Christ) is our peace...”* **Ephesians 2:14**
 - Remember what we read earlier? The peace of God will protect your hearts and minds **through Christ Jesus**.
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:16 proclaims, *“Now may the Lord of peace (that’s Jesus) Himself give you peace **always in every way.**”* Wow!

Peace is possible through problems

1. Jesus told His disciples *"In the world you will have tribulation..."* **John 16:33**
 - It is as if He doesn't want them to misunderstand what He is saying about peace. His peace does not mean a perfect, trouble-free, pain-free life.
2. His Spirit gives us internal peace and puts our hearts and minds at rest. Jesus talked about going away and sending back a Comforter which is His Holy Spirit.
3. Isn't it interesting that two of the main functions of the Holy Spirit is to help us pray and to teach us and remind us of spiritual truth.
4. This ties in with Philippians 4:6-8 - prayer (vs. 6) and filling our minds with truth (vs. 8 - the Word) and what is in between? An unexplainable peace!
5. In so many ways, peace is a daily decision - the things you've learned or do - and the God of peace will be with you. **Philippians 4:9**
6. If we are not attempting to connect with God through prayer and through His Word, how can we expect an internal peace at any level in our daily life?
7. But when we put Christ at the **center** of our lives and seek Him daily, peace will flood our hearts and minds. What does this mean for us? A heart at rest, better and stronger relationships, a better outlook on life.
8. Remember, peace is a fruit of His Spirit working in our lives. You can't get true peace any other way. It's all about Jesus!!
9. Read John 14:27 and 16:33 one more time.



Read Mark 4:35-41. Summarize this passage in 1-2 sentences.

Look closely at verse 40. Jesus says, “Why are you so fearful?” Jesus’ question assumes that the disciples have no need to fear. Why is that?



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If you have Jesus living inside of you, how does that affect your level of fear? How should that affect your level of peace?



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The Fruit of Peace - Part 2 (Psalm 3-5)

1. It's when problems come that our peace is truly tested and threatened. When tragedy strikes, when people hurt you, when life throws you a curveball, when grief overtakes you... that's when the challenge comes for peace.
2. Many of the Psalms were written during times of terrible distress. Such is the case with Psalms 3, 4, 5. They were written by King David during some of the darkest days of his life. **Psalms 3:1, 4:1**
3. David had been forced to flee Jerusalem because his own son, Absalom, had rebelled against him, led a coup, seized his dad's throne, totally disrespected his dad publicly, and was even contemplating killing his own father.
4. Yet in the midst of all this turbulence and unrest, David experienced peaceful rest within (3:5-6, 4:8). David didn't miss a wink of sleep. Isn't this amazing? What peace of heart and mind!
5. Is this kind of peace and rest available to every believer today? The answer to that question is "absolutely." We have been given a promise.
 - *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* **Philippians 4:6-7**
6. How can we find peace within when there is unrest and turmoil all around us? Peace is the fruit of His Spirit working in us. How can we cooperate with the Spirit's work instead of quenching it? Let's learn from David's life. Let's examine three principles, one from each of these Psalms.

Focus on the Lord; don't fear the enemy - Psalm 3

1. Sometimes people's answer for a lack of peace is to tell you to simply think positive and don't accept that anything is bad.
2. David was not living in denial. He was well aware of his problems. He knew they existed and what they were. In fact, he begins this Psalm by looking at his discouraging circumstances. Vs. 1-2
 - David, the true king, was rejected, and a usurper was on the throne.

- What a picture of today! Christ, the true and legitimate King of this earth was rejected by mankind. He left this earth as the rejected and exiled King. There is a usurper on this earth today. His name is Satan. Paul calls him the "god (not the true God) of this world." **1 Peter 5:8**
3. Satan is our enemy, and just as Absalom hated and persecuted those who believed in King David, Satan hates and persecutes those who believe and trust in King Jesus, the true Christ.
 4. We have an enemy. And as long as he is loose, there will be problems and distresses in this earthly life. He deceives and devours. **1 Thessalonians 3:3-4**
 5. But here is the key - David turned his focus immediately from his problems (he didn't deny them) and began to focus on the Lord and who He is. Vs. 3-4
 - *"You are a shield for me"* - in other words, you are my protector from the strikes of the enemy. **Ephesians 6:11**
 - *"My glory"* - this is a reference to the presence of God.
 - *"The one who raises up my head"* - In other words, we have the ultimate victory. Satan may win some battles, but we will win the war! We are on the side of the King of kings. **1 Corinthians 15:57**
 6. When David contemplated that he had God's protection, presence, and power, notice how the fear began to dissipate and gave way to trust and confidence. Vs. 5-8 cf. **2 Timothy 1:7**
 7. We can either focus on our problems or focus on the Lord. One results in peace the other stress and inner turmoil.

We can either focus on our problems or focus on the Lord.

Trust in the Lord; continue to do right - Psalm 4

1. When problems come into our lives, Satan wants to convince you of two things:
 - God doesn't care.
 - God's Word is not true.
2. If Satan can undermine your trust in God and His Word, he can have his way with you. What possible defense do you have?

3. David was being attacked and dodging bullets from everywhere:
 - From without (vs. 2) - wicked unbelievers. Cf. 57:4
 - From within (vs. 6) - people in David's own camp were doubting God's goodness. Satan loves to do this.
4. David absolutely refused to accept the enemy's lies and affirms his trust in the Lord in this Psalm.
 - God hasn't forgotten me. Vs. 3 (God is not unfair, unrighteous, or unjust.)
 - I will continue to do right and trust Him. Vs. 4-5
5. What an inspiration for us today. We live in this wicked world that is controlled by Satan, yet we are not **of** this world. We are citizens of heaven.
6. Satan will do all he can to neutralize our influence for Christ. He does this by casting doubt on God's character and God's Word. The Bible says we must stand against the wiles of Satan. **Ephesians 6:17**
7. When you begin to doubt God and His Word, you will forfeit that inner peace (you may have happy moments, but not a true, sustained inner peace). As you stand upon His Word and continue to trust it, obey it, and do right, it brings a sustaining peace to your heart. **Colossians 3:15-16a**

Call upon the Lord; stay connected to Him - Psalm 5

1. David was in the deepest valley of his life. What did he do? 3:4, 7; 4:1; 5:2-3, 7
2. David stayed intimately connected to God through prayer and worship. This was how he could sleep at night and find peaceful rest. He was seeking God.
3. There is a principle that we see throughout the entire Bible. God desires for people to call upon Him.
4. What a challenge it is to our hearts to see David's prayer life. 5:1-3
 - David said, "I am going to begin every day by calling upon the Lord." David didn't just pray a quick prayer on the run. He was very thoughtful in the words he spoke to God. 5:1
5. And God gave David a peaceful joy in the midst of these dark days. 5:11

6. Did you know that there is an indescribable joy and sustaining peace that comes to our hearts when we call upon the Lord? Peace comes through prayer (talking to God). Remember Philippians 4:6-7?
7. Prayer doesn't always change the circumstances and take all of our problems away, but prayer changes **you** and our perspective as we talk to God.
8. God desires to give us peaceful rest even in the midst of unrest. It isn't something that you stumble onto accidentally. It comes from within. It is a fruit of the Spirit. It comes as we grow and cooperate with the Spirit's working in our lives.



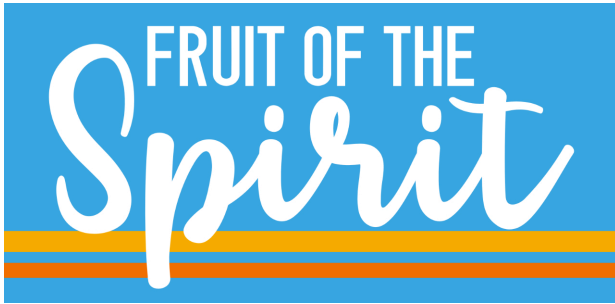
Why is peace with others so important in our relationship with God?



Describe a time in the past week when you felt a lack of peace. Why did you struggle to find peace in that situation?



How can you find peace within when there is unrest around you?



THE FRUIT OF PATIENCE

Psalm 145:5-9 & James 5:7-11

Introduction

1. Patience means long-tempered. The old English word is “longsuffering” which Webster's defines as “patiently enduring lasting offense or hardship.” In the Bible, patience carries the idea of two things:
 - The ability to endure for a long time whatever opposition and suffering may come our way, and to show perseverance for God through that suffering (adverse circumstances).
 - The ability to put up with the weaknesses and failures of others (adverse people) and to show forbearance towards them, without getting quickly irritated or angry or seeking revenge.
2. The word “patient” is used in both these ways in the New Testament.
 - Patiently enduring **problems**. **James 5:10**
 - Patiently enduring **people**. **Ephesians 4:2**
3. Patience demands strength and stamina. It means we are able to **control** our emotions and responses.
4. Patience doesn't come naturally to most of us, which is why we need the Spirit of God to make it grow in our lives.
5. Patience comes out of the fruit of peace that preceded it in verse 22. Patience is when the peace of God rules your heart and it shows in your dealings with others and in how you handle adverse circumstances or people.
6. Before we think about how **we** should behave, let's contemplate God's patience. Because remember, the fruit of the Spirit is when God's own character is displayed in and through us in our daily lives.

The Patience of God (this is what we want to live in and through us)

1. Have you ever thought about God's patience and how amazing it is?
2. We think of God as being more harsh in the Old Testament, and the meek, lowly, and patient Jesus in the New Testament, but patience is part of God's character throughout the entire Bible.
3. Read what Exodus 34:6 proclaims about God. *"Slow to anger"* is a great way to express the fruit of patience. God has a long fuse.
4. Psalm 78 - this chapter details how good God was to Israel and how they constantly provoked God and sinned against Him and basically trampled upon His grace and goodness. Yet look at vs. 37-38. What divine patience!
5. Another illustration of God's amazing patience is the story of Nineveh - a pagan, wicked city. God was going to destroy them after years of patience. But God would give them one more chance, and Jonah delivered the message to them. They repented, and God did not bring judgment. Look at Jonah 4:2. "I know you!"
6. The patience of God does not mean that He excuses sin, sweeps it under the rug and acts like it doesn't exist. It just means that God is not swift to anger and judgment. His patience and compassion give people time to repent and turn to Him. Romans 2:4 explains it well.
7. Romans 2:5 is a warning that God's patience does not negate His judgment and justice. God is patient, but He's not permissive.
8. This entire dispensation that we live in today is a testimony to the patience of God. It is called the dispensation of grace. Why? Because the world deserves the wrath of God. We crucified Christ, but God, in His patience has extended grace. He is giving people in this world the opportunity to turn to Him and be saved.
 - This is the only reason He allows sin to go unchecked.
9. When you think about the incredible patience of God, it kind of makes you feel small when you fly off the handle for the smallest things at people, hold grudges over petty offenses, get angry when you feel slighted, etc.

His patience and compassion gives people time to repent and turn to Him.

10. Look up this verse from the book of Isaiah. **Isaiah 43:24**

- God talks about how Israel had neglected to serve Him and bring the appropriate sacrifices. Patience has a lot to do with how much you are able to bear or carry.
- This doesn't mean that God was literally, physically tired, but it means that when God is being patient it is because He is carrying the heavy load of human sin. He is doing the heavy lifting.

11. When God is patient and forgives, it is only because God chooses to carry our sins Himself, to bear the weight and cost of them on His own shoulders.

12. That is precisely what Jesus did for us on the cross. Hebrews 12:2 talks about how Jesus endured the cross. This speaks of patience. **Isaiah 53**

- Vs. 4 - surely he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows
- Vs. 6 - the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all
- Vs. 12 - thus he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors

13. That same Spirit of Christ lives in us and desires to bear the fruit of patience in our lives daily. He wants us to have that same grace and patience with our spouse, kids, parents, friends, people who irritate us that Jesus had on the cross as He bore our sins.

14. In the Bible patience carries the idea of two things:

- The ability to endure adverse **circumstances** for a long time whatever suffering may come our way, and to show perseverance for God through that suffering.
- The ability to endure adverse **people** - the weaknesses and failures of others and to show forbearance towards them, without getting quickly irritated or angry or seeking revenge.

15. To put it simply, patience (in the Bible) is that ability to patiently endure problems and people. Let's examine both of these areas.

Patiently enduring problems (James 5:7-11)

1. How do we know if we are growing in the fruit of patience? We really **don't** know until we're tested... and problems are one of the things that will reveal where we are at in the fruit of patience.

2. Do we handle problems and suffering with grace or (when we feel like we got a raw deal) do we get angry, bitter, or mad at God. Do we spout out pessimism and griping? Problems put us to the test. They reveal our patience level.
3. Look at **James 5:10-11**. Notice again that suffering and patience are correlated.
 - He uses the prophets and Job as examples of suffering and patience. And James is writing this to encourage believers who were suffering great affliction for their faith in Christ.
4. What do we learn from this text about patience?

Patience grows in us as we understand the principle of delayed gratification (vs. 7)

1. Look at James' uses of patience in vs. 7-8a. What a fantastic illustration of a farmer. He has to be patient, doesn't he? You don't plant seeds in the morning and get fruit and veggies in your fields that night. It takes months of patience and doing the right things day after day.
 - If you do the right things and you are patient, you will reap a wonderful harvest.
2. James is teaching these believers the principle of delayed gratification and it is such an important Biblical principle. It is the opposite of immediate **pleasure**.
3. Delayed gratification means that I will **follow** God's Word even if it means temporary discomfort or displeasure so that I can eventually experience true, godly, gratification.
4. It's also the gratification that comes from an internal peace knowing that I obeyed God and did right. I was patient. **Psalms 37:1, 7-9, 16-17, 34-39**.
5. Moses understood the principle of patience and delayed gratification.
Hebrews 11:24-26
 - Think about all he would have missed had he lived for immediate and temporary pleasure. The reason why he chose suffering rather than having immediate pleasure and power is because *"He looked to the reward."* What patience! Keep in mind, it was 40 years before anything meaningful began to happen in his life. Then he wandered in the wilderness for 40 years!

Problems and people are the two things that try our patience. When problems occur, do you find it difficult to remain patient? How can you stay patient during difficult circumstances?



Think about the last time you lost your patience with someone. How do you think that person felt when you lost your temper? How can you make it right and prevent it from happening in the future?



Patience grows in us as we look for the Lord's return (vs. 8)

1. Notice how James ties in patience with the coming of the Lord in vs. 8.
2. The Bible teaches that there will be a distribution of rewards when Christ returns.
Colossians 3:23-24, Matthew 16:27, Revelation 11:18, 22:12
3. James is trying to get across the idea of, "It may not feel good now and it may even result in suffering for me right now, but I will be glad I did it when I see Jesus." Jesus taught the same thing. **Matthew 5:11-12**
 - For example, generosity. In the moment, it feels better to spend everything on yourself and your needs and wants... but the Bible promises that our generosity will result in treasures in heaven we will enjoy for all eternity when Jesus comes.

Patience grows in us as we believe in God's purpose (vs. 11)

1. When problems come in our lives and tragedy strikes, the temptation is to turn on God, blame God, and quit serving God with our lives.

- When we see the Lord at His return, we will be sorry we did that. God's purposes don't involve sending problems and tragedy into our lives. These things come to us naturally by living on a sin-cursed earth.
 - God's purpose for our lives is very simple: to help us to grow and be more like **Christ** and show forth Christ and His gospel to this world. God is for us, not against us. **Romans 8:28, 31**
 - James uses the Old Testament illustration of Job. Satan attacked Job and tried to destroy him, but Job would not let go of his faith in God. Job learned that the Lord is very gracious and merciful, and God turned all that around for good in Job's life.
 - Just like Job, we have to believe in God and believe in His purpose.
2. So patience has to do with patiently enduring problems, but then there is also the idea of patiently enduring people.

Patiently enduring people (vs. 9)

1. James alludes to this in vs. 9. It's so easy to demonstrate a lack of patience with people.
2. Sometimes we can handle **life** problems better than we can **people** problems!
3. There is a Bible word for when we are patient with people, and it's the word "*forbearance*." **Ephesians 4:2 KJV**
 - Forbearance - the ability to control yourself when others provoke you. Through the Holy Spirit, you do it in love. **1 Corinthians 13:7**
 - Forbearance means you are patient with others, mainly because you are very well aware of your own shortcomings and weaknesses. It means you remember that other people are probably having to forbear with you!
4. Another word for it is "*longsuffering*." This is the opposite of a person who has a short fuse. A person who is longsuffering is able to put up with other's shortcomings and have a gracious spirit and not be quick to retaliate.
5. It is not easy to be forbearing, longsuffering, or patient with people. It's hard to be like Christ in this area and allow this fruit to ripen in our lives. This is especially hard if we have been misunderstood, misinterpreted, falsely accused, or if we find out people are gossiping and spreading rumors about us.

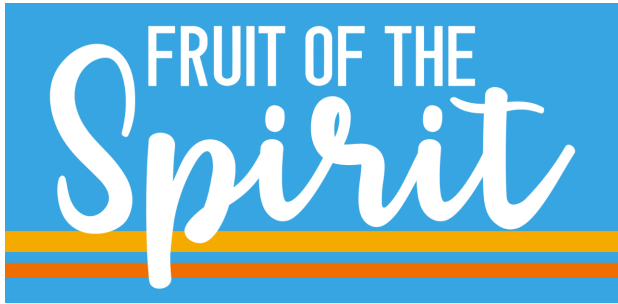
6. This is when patience is really put to the test in our lives. But that's when we know we are really growing in Christ. We refuse to get bitter and angry and persevere in our service and walk with Christ.
7. Too many believers want to quit when circumstances become difficult. This is when you need to be strengthened by God's Spirit and allow God's **Spirit** to produce the fruit of patience in your life.

How does knowing Jesus will return help you remain patient when you're experiencing problems? How does believing in God's purpose help you remain patient?



1 Corinthians 13:4-5 MEV says, "Love suffers long and... is not easily provoked." When we're patient with others, it shows that we love them. Think about Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. He endured the cross without lashing out in anger. How does that apply to you?





THE FRUIT OF KINDNESS

John 13:1-17

Introduction

1. The fifth fruit is gentleness. Today, we don't use the word "gentle" very much to describe people, but we use it to describe being soft or delicate. So you may be confused and think, "God wants me to go around and handle things gently?"
2. Actually the Greek word that Paul uses here is most often translated (by KJV translators) as "kindness." **Ephesians 2:7; Titus 3: 3-4; Colossians 3:12**
3. Christian people should be the kindest people on earth. Why? Because we know Jesus Christ. We are Christ followers. So let's consider our heavenly Father and our Savior.

God's Lovingkindness

1. God is a God of great kindness. In fact, Jesus told His disciples to love their enemies and be kind to them. What was Jesus' basis for this instruction? He said "**God is kind to the unthankful and the evil. Be therefore merciful, even as your Father is merciful.**" **Luke 6:35-36 MEV**
2. We can think of God as being harsh in the Old Testament, but over and over God is praised for His kindness. In fact, there is an old English word used in the Bible and that is the word "lovingkindness." **Psalm 63:3, 138:2**
 - It links the first fruit of the Spirit (love) with this thing of kindness; and it is so true! Kindness is thoughtful love in action. If you love God and love people, it leads you to be kind to others.
 - When God is kind, He is acting in generous and merciful love. Praise the Lord for His lovingkindness!
3. After David committed a terrible sin against God with Bathsheba, notice that he appeals to God's lovingkindness (**Psalm 51:1**). Notice he links God's lovingkindness with the abundance of His compassion.
 - Hard-hearted, cold people are not kind people. Compassionate warm-hearted, tender-hearted people are kind.

4. Jeremiah 9:24 says that God delights in exercising lovingkindness. Kindness is part of God's very nature. He delights in showing kindness.

The Kindness of Christ

1. We said that all of this fruit is a beautiful and accurate description of our Savior, Jesus Christ.
2. Let's look at just a couple of examples of the kindness of Christ and ask ourselves if we would have responded in a similar situation. Ask God to change us and ripen the fruit of kindness in our lives.
3. Washing of the disciple's feet - **John 13:1-17**
 - The disciples met in an upper room to have one last supper together before Jesus would die on the cross. The roads were dusty, dirty, and filthy. They wore open sandals, so it was a custom to have your feet washed when entering a home.
 - But the host would not typically do that. It was a job reserved for a hired hand or a servant. What would you have done?
 - Jesus got up and grabbed a towel and started washing the dirty feet of all 12 of the disciples. The one who held all power in His hands was so kind.
 - This is amazing when you consider the fact that Peter was about to deny Him, Thomas would doubt Him, the others would run away right when He needed them, and Judas Iscariot would betray Him.
 - Jesus knew they would do these things, yet Jesus was so kind.
 - This is the kindness that He wants to live in and through us daily.
4. The healing of a servant's ear - **Luke 22:49-51**
 - They are arresting Jesus. Peter quickly draws his sword and begins to brandish it wildly. Malchus (servant to the High Priest) is struck with blood gushing from his head. The blade has sliced his right ear clean off (probably trying for his head). Can't you see it? He clutches at his head to stop the bleeding and drops to one knee. Blood is pouring down his neck, drenching his shirt. He probably began to wobble and faint.

- Then there is a sudden warmth. The pain ceases. This man Jesus is kneeling before him, His hand covering his wound. All Malchus can see is the man's eyes filled with a gentleness and kindness that melt all enmity. "You'll be alright, now," Jesus assures him. Malchus reaches up to feel his head. The ear is there - all of it. His ear is whole, the bleeding has stopped, and only the blood on his clothes is there to indicate that there ever was a wound.
 - This has to be one of the most amazing acts of kindness. Malchus is there to arrest and kill Jesus, to do Him great harm, but Jesus treats with complete gentleness, kindness. Jesus said to even be kind to your enemies, and He was. He was such an example.
 - This is the same kindness He wants to grow in you and me.
5. Do the words out of our lips show kindness? The Bible says that people wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of Jesus' mouth.
- Think about the Proverbs 31 woman. It says that "*in her tongue is the law of kindness.*" In other words, kindness rules her tongue and words.
6. Kindness is not just a term to describe actions, but a characteristic that describes **people**, people that habitually behave in a way that blesses and benefits others.
7. **Philippians 2:4-5** - Kind people are people who unselfishly look to the interests of others. And that's Jesus! That is our God! He is full of lovingkindness. God wants to grow in us that generous heart of kindness.

Read Philippians 2:4-8. Jesus set the example for what kindness looks like. What makes it difficult to show kindness to others?



How was Jesus' sacrifice on the cross the ultimate example of kindness?



Think of one person in your life. How will you show kindness to them this week?



Examining other stories from the life of Christ

1. The woman who touched Jesus' garment - **Luke 8:40-50**

- This is an amazing story because Jesus is a man on a mission. He is heading somewhere to do something very important.
- But Jesus allows Himself to be interrupted and to help this poor woman who is at the end of her own rope. Jesus cared about her and was so kind to her.
- When little children wanted to be close to Jesus and threatened to interrupt His busy schedule, the disciples tried to shoo them away. Jesus said, "Don't forbid the little children to come to me." **Matthew 19:14 MEV**

2. The crazy man from Gadara - **Luke 8:26-39**

- This man is full of Satan, homeless (lives in the graveyard), shrieking, cutting himself with stones, and not a stitch of clothing on.
- Jesus and the disciples arrive and they see this wild man running toward them.
- The disciples saw a crazy man, but Jesus saw a soul in need. Jesus was so kind to this guy - a guy that nobody else would have anything to do with. It is not natural to be kind to somebody like this - somebody that is an outcast of society.
- That's why we need a supernatural work of the Spirit of Christ within us - the fruit of His Spirit!

- At the end of the story, this man is sitting, clothed, and in his right mind. He wanted to stay with Jesus, but Jesus said, "Go home to your friends and tell them all that the Lord has done for you and how He has had compassion on you." Compassion is a big part of kindness.

3. Crippled man at the pool of Bethesda - **John 5:1-8**

- This man had been sick for 38 years. Verse 6 says, "Jesus saw him lying there." Jesus had eyes to see hurting people who needed help.
- This man is obviously very sick and very alone. Can you imagine the joy in this man when he was able to stand, pick up his pallet and walk? His life was finally important to someone else.

Three basic principles of what kindness really looks like

1. Kind people allow for interruptions in their life. **Luke 8:40-50**

- In this story, this woman in desperate need interrupted the Savior who was on a mission to help another person.
- Yet Jesus responded to these interruptions, not with irritation or dismissal, but with kindness and warmth.

2. Kind people don't stop to decide who deserves their kindness. **Luke 8:26-39**

- Some people have very selective kindness. They are kind to people they want to impress or people who can help them, but this is not the fruit of kindness at work. This is pride.
- When the Spirit of Christ truly bears this fruit of kindness in and through us, it isn't something that just happens randomly, it is a way of life. We are kind to the most powerful person we meet and the lowest beggar. We treat the person flipping our burgers at a fastfood restaurant like we do our doctor or attorney with the same kindness.
- James said that if you treat a wealthy person who comes into church differently than you do a person who is poverty stricken in tattered clothes, you have sinned against God. God is kind to everybody. **James 2:1-4**

God is kind to everybody.

3. Kind people are tenderhearted, seeing and meeting needs. **John 5:1-8**

- Someone with a hard heart would have never been at this pool to begin with. Around it lay a great crowd of invalids, blind, lame, and paralyzed people. Is this a place you would have gone and walked around and hung out? Jesus did.
- Jesus saw this man. He had been there for 38 years. He had nobody to help him.
- Jesus cared deeply, and Jesus' heart was moved with compassion.
- Kind people give of themselves and go beyond duty. They do something for others, not because they **have** to but because they **choose** to. It means doing something you won't get paid to do. You do what is kind for its own sake and for the sake of the other person.

In Conclusion

1. Being a Spirit-filled Christ follower means that I follow His example, and I bear the fruit of kindness. Why do we often fail? We probably all have opportunities to show kindness, but we don't always do it.
2. Sometimes we are just self-consumed, or don't want to be interrupted or bothered. Sometimes we are just oblivious. Sometimes we just get cold hearted.
3. At these times I have to remind myself (since Christ lives in me) how I should be treating others around me - even strangers and even when I'm tired or under pressure. This challenge of showing kindness has to be faced.
4. Let's begin praying every day that the fruit of kindness will ripen in our lives!



How do I react when someone interrupts what I'm doing?

Am I kind to everyone or just the people who are easy to like? Why is it difficult to show kindness to someone who's rude to me?

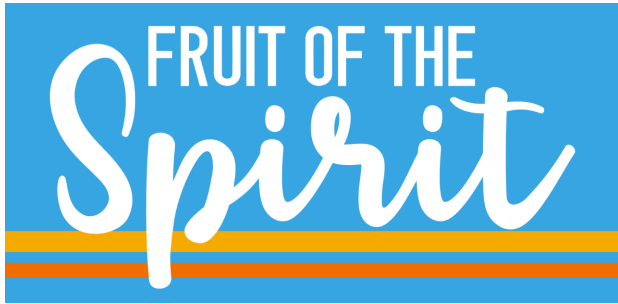


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Whose need(s) can I meet this week?



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THE FRUIT OF GOODNESS

Mark 6:30-44

Introduction

1. Goodness comes from the life of God within us. Goodness is a heart thing. It comes from inside.
2. Then it works its way out in the form of good works. Colossians 1:10
 - As the believer is filled with the fruit of goodness, he finds himself being fruitful in every good work.
3. Let's begin our study of this fruit of goodness by examining the goodness of our God, because like we said, goodness comes from the life of God within us.

God is good

1. Goodness is a very central part of God's character. God is good!
 - *"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in goodness and truth."* **Exodus 34:6 MEV**
 - *"Oh, give thanks to the Lord, **for He is good**; for His mercy endures forever."* **1 Chronicles 16:34**
 - *"Oh, that men would praise the Lord **for His goodness**, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness."* **Psalms 107:8-9 KJV-ER**
 - *"**The Lord is good**, a stronghold in the day of distress; and He knows those who take refuge in Him."* **Nahum 1:7 MEV**
2. Christ was God in the flesh and was a living demonstration of God's goodness. Jesus was a man of goodness. **Matthew 15:30-31**
3. In fact, when Peter was describing Him to some Gentiles who would not have known Christ, Peter said, *"how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, **who went about doing good** and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."* **Acts 10:38 MEV**

4. Jesus went about doing good. We saw how kind Christ was, and this fruit of goodness is closely related to that. Kindness and goodness is love in action. Example: Feeding of the 5,000. **Mark 6:30-44**
- Jesus did good even when He was exhausted and hungry (vs. 30-32). That takes the filling of God's Spirit for sure!
 - Jesus' goodness flowed forth from His compassion. Vs. 34
 - Jesus' goodness extended to spiritual **and** physical needs. Vs. 34-37
 - Jesus was willing to be inconvenienced for others.

The Cross - goodness exemplified

1. Why is goodness such an important part of God's working in our lives?
2. It is because this fruit of goodness is a marvelous picture of the gospel - the cross-work and resurrection of our Savior!
3. Paul said, "*not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*" **Romans 12:21 MEV**
4. This is exactly what Christ did at the cross. Jesus bore our sins and all of our evils in His own body on the cross.
5. We have done sin and evil towards God, but He responded by bearing our sin debt and dying our death for us. **Romans 5:8**
6. The cross is the ultimate expression of the goodness of God! The resurrection proved its victory. Goodness overcomes evil. This is the story of the Bible and the heart of the gospel.
7. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for us is not just proof of God's goodness, but it is the source and pattern of any and all goodness we can do as believers.
8. We don't do good works to **be** saved, but we demonstrate good works because we **are** saved, and Christ's goodness is living through us! **Ephesians 2:8-10**



What does it mean to be filled with goodness?



How did Jesus show goodness? How does God continue to show goodness?



How can you show goodness to others this week?

What does it look like when you are filled with the fruit of goodness?

1. It starts with a good attitude. **Titus 3:1**

- **Good** works proceed from a **good** attitude. Goodness comes from a person with a right heart, a right attitude. We use the phrase, “out of the goodness of his/her heart.” This is exactly what Jesus taught. **Luke 6:43-45**
- Notice Titus 3:9. People who are contentious and argumentative are going to struggle with this fruit of goodness.
- How does this apply to our lives (our attitudes)?
- We may have the right **position**, but our **disposition** stinks. That turns people off. But when we do good works and display goodness, this makes the gospel attractive to others.
- Paul said to Titus that when the people of the church are doing good works, they “exemplify” the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. **Titus 2:10**
- That word “exemplify” means “to decorate, to beautify.” You beautify your beliefs (the gospel of Christ) when you bear the fruit of goodness. So the fruit of goodness starts with a good attitude.

2. We look for opportunities to serve others. **Titus 2:14**

- After Christ saves you, you should be **zealous** of good works.
- When Paul says to be zealous of good works, he is saying that you are looking for opportunities to serve people and do good. Not just at church, but all week long.
- Do we look for opportunities to serve others and do good? **Galatians 6:10**
- “As we have opportunity, let us do good...” The problem so many times is not that we don’t have opportunities; it’s that we don’t **see** them and recognize them.
- Our brothers and sisters in Christ should be the first place we serve and do good. Why? They’re family. It starts with our physical and spiritual family, but our goodness should extend to all people, every day, no matter where we are.

3. We strive to make good works a daily part of our lives. **Titus 3:8**

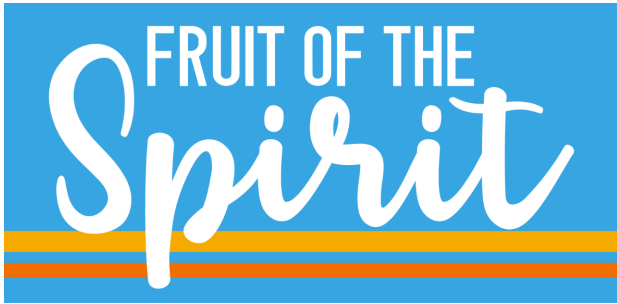
- Titus 3:8 says that we need to **maintain** good works. Maintain means that it is a regular practice.

- We need to strive to extend goodness to people each and every day. Doing good is not just an occasional random act.
- If we maintain good works, this means that goodness comes to describe who we are as a person.
- **Example:** Barnabas (Acts 11:23-24). Barnabas was a good man and as a result had a great influence for Christ and the gospel.
- We aren't doing good just for the sake of doing good. No, there's a higher purpose, and that purpose is the gospel. We want people to come to Jesus and know Him. We want people to see **His** goodness through **our** good works.
- This is exactly what Jesus taught (**Matthew 5:16**). In this context, Jesus is encouraging His followers to do good works, and they will be like salt and light on this earth.
- Salt was used to stop meat or fish from rotting or spoiling. It counteracted that natural process of decay and corruption. Jesus is teaching that in a world that is full of corruption, His followers stand against that by the way they live and speak, by doing the right thing, by their goodness.
- Through our good works we are like a light in the darkness. **Ephesians 2:10** cf. **Ephesians 5:8-11**
- We have a new identity. It's no longer darkness but light. So we should walk as children of light. What does that mean? Look at vs. 9. The first thing there is "goodness." Our lives and actions now align themselves with the goodness and truth of God.
- Vs. 10 - we do what is pleasing to the Lord. Instead of doing unfruitful works of darkness, we do good works of light. Vs. 11
- In **1 Thessalonians 5:15**. Paul says to do good "to one another and to all." This means that doing good is a daily part of our lives. It's not compartmentalized.
- Serving others and doing good is not just a church thing we do on Sunday or during outreach events. No, we are the same good person at home or at work that we are at church. Our goodness extends into every part of our lives.

*We want
people to come
to Jesus and
know Him.*

In Conclusion

1. We do good works to meet needs in peoples' lives. When we see needs, our first instinct is to meet that need, if at all possible. Some can do more than others when it comes to monetary assistance, but there are many other ways you can do good works for others.
 - It may just be: an encouraging word; a cup of coffee together; helping them carry a heavy load; their car needs a jump and you have cables; something is broken and you know how to fix it; you babysit for a young couple; you give the garbage men a cool drink, etc.
 - It brings such joy and meaning to every day! Who can I be good to today?
2. I have to **learn** to exercise goodness on behalf of others, be generous, and give of myself.
3. When you do good works it always costs you something, and that's what makes it so **Christ**-like.



THE FRUIT OF FAITH

Galatians 3

Introduction - What is Faith?

1. When you look up various definitions of faith, you come away with this thought - faith is belief or trust in something.
2. Everyday people exercise faith or trust (eating at a restaurant, flying, driving, taking prescriptions, getting married, roller coaster, giving your credit card to a waitress).
3. We don't know everything, and we don't have all the answers and even statistical data, but we trust and believe, and therefore we act.
4. So faith is trust or belief in something. Every day we exercise faith.

Faith as a fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22-23

1. Faith as a fruit of God's Spirit deals with the choice to believe **God**, and believe what God has said and asked us to do. **Hebrews 11:3**
2. Faith is a vital part of the Christian life from beginning to end. We enter into a relationship with God and become His child by faith. **Galatians 3:8, 9, 14, 22-26**
 - We trust and believe what God has said about us (we are sinners and deserve death - separation from God - it is not our inherent right to be with God). But we also believe what God has said about His Son Jesus Christ. He died for our sin, paid the wages of our sin, and rose from the dead to give us life - eternal life, never ending life, life in God's presence forever. Salvation comes when we believe God's Word. **2 Timothy 3:15**
 - Not blind faith - there is plenty of outward evidence, but at some point faith has to be exercised because you weren't there to observe it, and even if you were, how do you interpret His death and resurrection? What does it mean? What kind of response does it require? That is where faith comes in - we trust what God has said about it.

- **Illustration:** Thomas - **John 20:26-29**
3. After we enter into God's family, again, it is all about walking in faith - trusting and believing what God has said. **Galatians 3:11, 5:6, Colossians 2:6**
- It is through faith that we overcome the deceptions of Satan. **Ephesians 6:16**
 - It is through faith that we overcome the world. **1 John 5:4**
 - ▶ The world tells us things that are diametrically opposite of what God has said. Which will we believe? The fruit of faith grows as we trust God.
 - Without faith, we cannot please God. **Hebrews 11:6** (We can talk all day long about loving God, but if we aren't willing to trust in what He has said, we cannot please God. Jesus said, *"If you love me, keep my commandments."*)
cf. **Romans 14:23**
4. Look at how Solomon (the wisest and most brilliant man on earth at that time) says it. **Proverbs 3:5-6**
5. Faith says, "I will trust in the Lord with all my heart..."



How is faith exhibited on a daily basis?



Why is faith the foundation of everything?

What does it mean to walk in faith? How can you make a daily choice to walk in faith?



Where is your faith?

1. Everybody's faith rests in one of two places. **1 Corinthians 2:6-7**
 - There is worldly wisdom or the wisdom of this age. It is also called man's wisdom. It's earthly.
 - And then there is God's wisdom. That's heavenly.
2. Worldly wisdom is focused on man; God's wisdom is focused on God. Worldly wisdom loves to leave God out; godly wisdom **begins** with reverence and humility before God. It starts there.
 - **Proverbs 9:10** says, *"But the fool has said in his heart there is no God."*
3. The world is filled with teachings and ideologies that sound like great wisdom, but will ultimately lead us away from God. Proverbs 14:12 warns that there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death (it leads you away from God and the life of God).
 - Earthly wisdom says follow your heart, godly wisdom says that the heart is deceitful above all things (follow God).
 - Earthly wisdom says seeing is believing, godly wisdom says blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.
 - Earthly wisdom says there is nothing more important than loving your family and friends (people), godly wisdom says to love God more than anybody or anything.
 - Earthly wisdom says there are many ways to God, godly wisdom believes Jesus when He says, "I am THE way..."

4. For example, you read a book or listen to something on-line, or watch a talk show, and it sounds great, but it doesn't match what God has said. You have to decide which you will believe. Does your faith stand in the wisdom of men or the power of God?

How is your faith doing?

2 Thessalonians 1:3

1. Not every person's faith is at the same level. The Bible uses phrases like "strong in the faith," "you of little faith," "great faith." So when it comes to the fruit of faith, we are all at different levels.

- If you are saved, you have been given a measure of faith, but what are you doing with that measure of faith?

2. We are all at different faith levels, but there is one aspect that should be true of all of us. We should all possess a **growing** faith. We should be growing in the fruit of faith. Maybe you are not where you want to be but you are moving in the right direction.

We should be growing in the fruit of faith.

3. This was the apostle Paul's desire for the Thessalonians. **1 Thessalonians 3:10**

- The word "perfect" has the idea of bringing to maturity, adjusting.

4. Paul's desire and prayer was answered. Look at **2 Thessalonians 1:3**.

5. These believers are such an example of a growing faith. But how did it happen? Our faith does not grow by accident. Some of you, your faith is really growing and you're getting stronger in the faith, and there are definite reasons why. How does our faith grow?

6. First, you believe and receive God's Word. **1 Thessalonians 2:13**

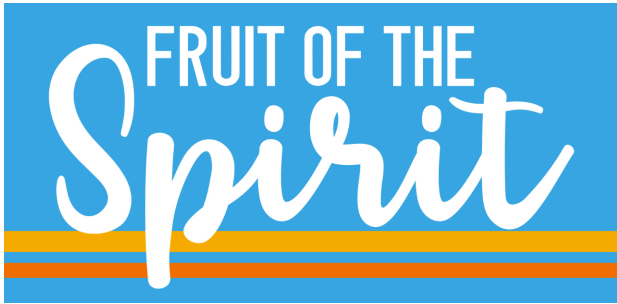
- This is the number one reason why people's faith grows. These believers received the Word of God **as** the Word of God. The result is that it was powerfully working in their lives.
- There is a direct correlation to your relationship to the Word of God and to your faith. **Romans 10:17, 1 Thessalonians 1:8**
- If you are strong in your faith it is because you believe in God's Word and you are getting a steady diet and intake of God's Word.
- The Bible is the key component to your faith.

7. Second, your focus is on Christ. **1 Thessalonians 1:3, 6, 9-10**

- A great faith is centered on a person - Jesus Christ. Repeatedly in this letter, Paul encourages them to keep looking for Jesus and His coming.
- Faith is only as valid as its object. Your faith will only be as strong as the object of your faith.
- Satan's strategy is to move your faith away from Christ to something else. He says, "Have faith in yourself, have faith in others, have faith in circumstances, have faith in the wisdom of men." But true wisdom says, "*Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...*"

In Conclusion

1. If you will focus on God's Word and Jesus Christ, your faith will grow, **even** through trials and tribulations.
2. In fact, whenever Jesus commended someone for having a great faith, it always started with a problem. Every problem we have is an opportunity for God to show Himself strong and increase our faith.
3. Problems alone won't increase your faith. The reason why our faith grows so many times through problems is that problems have a way of humbling us and causing us to look to Christ and look to His Word - that's when our faith grows! **2 Thessalonians 1:3-4**



THE FRUIT OF MEEKNESS

Galatians 5:22-23

Introduction

1. The fruit of meekness is probably the most overlooked of all the fruit listed in Galatians 5:22-23. This fruit often gets completely overlooked in an aggressive, self-centered, self-seeking culture. Meekness isn't something being sought.
2. You hear people say, "I need to be more loving, want joy, peace, etc." But, "I want to be more meek?" You don't hear that too much.
3. But yet it is so crucial for the health of our everyday relationships at home, work, school, friendships, church life, etc. And meekness is absolutely essential for a right walk with Christ.
4. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:5**, "*Blessed are the **meek**, for they shall inherit the earth.*" He is speaking to Israel on the Mount. He's teaching them about what is truly important and what their priorities should be.
5. Jesus is referring to those who will enter His kingdom when it comes to this earth and notice that meekness is a prerequisite. Why meekness?
6. Because we are going to learn that meekness is the opposite of pride and self-will. God resists the proud.
7. Jesus is saying to Israel, "You aren't going to get into **my** kingdom on **your** terms - all puffed up and full of yourself. You have to do things my way and submit to me." To have a submissive heart and to humbly do things God's way takes this fruit of meekness.

What is the fruit of meekness all about?

1. Meekness is commonly misunderstood because of modern day definitions. People tend to associate this word with being weak or timid, and if you are meek, you allow people to walk all over you. But this is not what it means at all. That is **not** the Biblical definition.

2. In the Bible, meekness carries the idea of controlled strength.
3. Meekness is not **weakness**. Here's how we know - Moses (arguably the greatest leader in the Old Testament) and Jesus (without argument the greatest leader of the New Testament) were both two of the most powerful and effective leaders in the Bible, and both were said to possess meekness.
4. Let's look at Moses first as we seek to define this fruit of meekness.
 - He was said to be "very meek," above everyone else on the face of the earth (**Numbers 12:3**). This is a man who led an entire nation out of the slavery of another nation and moved them all to their own land.
 - The context was when Aaron and Miriam were criticizing Moses over his choice of a wife and were openly rebelling against his leadership and questioning it. Moses never complained to God about the grief they caused him, and he didn't retaliate against them. He bore that burden and allowed God to handle it, and of course, God rose to his defense. But Moses responded in meekness.
 - Moses' meek disposition was also evident when he was literally wearing himself out trying to help everyone in Israel's camp and solve their daily problems. In spite of this, he never complained. He gave of himself sacrificially. And when his father-in-law gave him advice, he listened and implemented those changes. He was teachable.
 - Moses' meekness was not weakness or timidity or letting other people just run over him. On the contrast, it was a powerful demonstration of disciplined strength beyond what most people could endure.
5. So meekness is not weakness. Jesus Christ who lives in us is **power** and wisdom (**1 Corinthians 1:24**). Meekness is **power** that is under control. When it's the **Biblical** fruit of meekness, it is power under the control of **God's Holy Spirit**.
 - **Example:** Most husbands are stronger than their wives physically and could intimidate and even abuse them (which is always wrong and sinful.) But when a man treats his wife humbly and with tenderness (when he could overpower her), this is an example of meekness - controlled strength.
6. When a person has meekness, they don't have to go around flexing their muscles and showing off their power and authority. They don't have to fly off the handle and intimidate others with their strength, or position, or authority.
7. One of the main reasons that people **fail** when given a leadership position (at work or church) is a lack of meekness.

- How do you move cattle? You drive cattle - get behind them with a whip and by yelling and screaming.
 - How do you move sheep? You *lead* sheep (driving them doesn't work). People are like sheep, Jesus said. You can't drive them like cattle. Meekness is when you seek to lead them like a shepherd by example and with humility.
 - Jesus is the greatest leader who ever lived, and He is not called the good cattle driver. He is called the Good Shepherd, Great Shepherd, and Chief Shepherd. Meekness is so essential in leadership.
8. Most of us have relationships where we lead, and some where we follow. What does it look like when you are meek in both those scenarios?
- If you are the leader (and you're meek), you lead others humbly. You are not arrogant and intimidating. You don't go around throwing your weight around. You are a servant/leader and always treat others with respect. You can be a strong leader, but also meek. Just means you are humble, listen to others, and treat people with respect.
 - If you are a follower and you are meek, you possess a quiet inner strength that causes you to submit to those in leadership over you with a good attitude. You don't resent them, but respect their position. You don't talk behind your leaders' back and disrespect them.
9. And spiritual meekness is when we ultimately submit to God. We follow God's ways. We do things God's way. Some of you may be struggling with that.
10. Meekness is when we possess a **humble** spirit and are not full of **ourselves**, but full of Christ! Jesus is overflowing in our lives - a gentle humility. **Romans 12:3**
- John the Baptist said of Jesus, "*He must increase and I must decrease.*" That's meekness. You get a church full of people with the fruit of meekness... unity! The win is when Jesus is glorified, not when I get my way.
 - Read what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10. He said that it was **His** (Jesus') grace working in me! The only thing good in me is Jesus.

Do you feel that the fruit of meekness is valued and prioritized the same as some of the other fruit, such as love, joy, peace and patience? Why or why not?



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Why do you think meekness is a fruit of the Spirit? Why is it so important?



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Read Ephesians 4:1-3. How can meekness help you live in unity with other followers of Jesus?



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The Fruit of Meekness - Part 2 (1 Kings 12)

1. Meekness is when whatever power or authority we have is under control of God's Holy Spirit (as a husband who is the leader of his home, wife and mom with kids, employee or a boss or business owner, church member). And meekness also causes us to submit to those in authority over us with a gentle humility.
2. Some antonyms for meekness would be words like arrogant, abrasive, domineering, controlling, rebellious, self-willed, prideful, full of yourself, etc. These are opposites of meekness. In other words, meekness is the answer to these issues.
3. Do any of those words describe you? Do you struggle with any of those? It's kind of hard to admit, isn't it? It really takes the Holy Spirit to reveal it to us. By the way, many times our insecurities cause us to lack meekness and think we have to "prove" to others how strong and powerful we are. Feelings of insecurity and inferiority are major contributors to a lack of meekness.
4. Most of us are insecure at some level (intellect, social standing, looks, job), and that is why we struggle with this fruit of meekness. We fail to see our strength and security in Christ, so we are always trying to prove to ourselves and others how strong, powerful, good, and successful we are - that we do matter.
5. Only Christ can change us (make us secure in Him) and bring that meekness (that gentle humility) into our lives. Let's consider Christ.

The Meekness of Christ - the Ultimate Role Model

1. Like Moses, there have been many leaders that could be described as spiritually meek. However, the ultimate role model when it comes to this fruit of meekness (controlled strength and power) is Jesus Christ.
 - *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me. For I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* **Matthew 11:28-29**
 - You get the picture of people who are weighted down internally (in their inner souls) by pressures from outside (to perform) and insecurities from within. So essentially, Jesus was saying that you can find your security and inner peace in Him. You won't find Him intimidating, bullying, or pressuring you to "perform."

2. Again, meekness is not weakness. Jesus was the strongest leader this world has ever known. And He was the most successful - He started a movement that has lasted 2000 years and changed countless lives. So Christ was strong, successful, but meek. Why is Christ said to be meek?
3. Like we said in Part 1, meekness is power under control. It's **not** exercising dominion over people like a dictator when we could. As a leader, instead of enriching yourself at others' expense, you actually bear others' burdens sacrificially. That's Jesus Christ!
4. Jesus was willing to take up our heavy burdens and bear them **for us** when He didn't have to. He didn't create them. We did through our sin and disobedience.

Isaiah 53:4-6

- Whenever we get consumed with making sure we get what we deserve, and that nothing gets put on us that shouldn't, we know we are struggling in this fruit of meekness. That is a warning sign.
5. In verse 7, the Bible says that He *"opened not his mouth."* This is such a key to help us understand meekness.
 - Why does it say He opened not His mouth? Because we know that Jesus talked and said things from the cross. The context is that this is a reference to the fact that as He was bearing burdens He didn't create, and He had the power and ability to release legions of angels with one word before and during His crucifixion, yet He opened not His mouth.
 - Like we said earlier, meekness is not weakness, but it is power restrained. It is power under the control of God's Spirit and God's will. Jesus refrained from judging and smashing His enemies so that He could fulfill God's will and atone for our sins, bear our sins, and redeem mankind.
 6. This selfless act of "power under control" revealed the meekness that filled His heart and life. The latent power that **could** be made manifest, He chose to hold in check in service to a higher and greater cause and for the greater good of others.
 7. He did not **take control** of this situation for His own benefit when He could have.

Meekness is not weakness. but it is power restrained.

Meekness - Essential for Leadership

1. There is another passage that speaks of Jesus' meekness. We see Jesus during His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Matthew 21:5 (KJV - ER) talks about Jesus coming in as their King, yet meek and humble and riding a donkey.

2. Think about this in contrast to other kings. They would come in riding with great fanfare on a fancy horse or chariot or being carried on a royal palanquin by servants.

Acts 25:23

3. Jesus was the King of kings, but didn't have to go around proving it. That's meekness. Contrast that to bloodthirsty tyrants and dictators who have walked this earth.

4. We have already established the fact that Jesus was strong and successful as a leader, but He was humble and meek, which means that those attributes **can** co-exist. You can be strong but humble. You can be successful, but meek.

5. Let's read what Jesus believed, taught, and practiced about leadership.

Matthew 20:25-28

- So there is lording leadership and servant leadership. There are two styles of leadership. One is based on leading with crushing power (subjugating people and smashing them if necessary). Whereas, servant leadership is based on leading people with meekness and humility.

6. There is a story in the Bible that demonstrates both of these styles. It's the story of Rehoboam, the son of King Solomon. After Solomon died, the people came to him and basically said, "lighten the load and treat us right and we will serve you."

1 Kings 12:1-19

- So this young man who is the heir apparent to the throne was faced with his first leadership decision. How should he respond to the people's request? He sought counsel from two groups of people - the young men and the older men.
- The older men basically said, "Be humble, be meek, lead by example, and have a servant's heart." vs. 7 (He rejected this counsel.)
- The young men basically said, "Be arrogant, brash, and throw your power around. Lord over them with your power and authority." vs. 10-11 (Notice that he answered them roughly - no meekness at or humility at all.)
- Needless to say, it all blew up in Rehoboam's face. He lost the unity of the kingdom and was a dismal failure as a leader. Why? He lacked meekness. It could have been so different if he would have valued what God values - a humble and contrite heart.

7. What is the Biblical solution? Grow in the fruit of meekness.

8. 1 Timothy 6:11 wisely tells us to follow after (pursue) meekness. It is essential for leadership, essential for healthy relationships, and essential for a thriving walk with Jesus Christ.

Talk about what meekness looks like. How would you define meekness? Start by saying what meekness is NOT and then talk about what it IS.



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What things in life make showing meekness difficult?

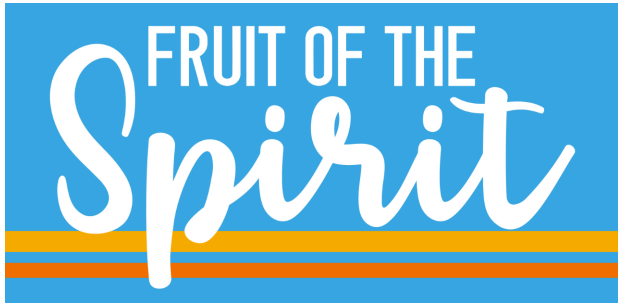


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Why is meekness so crucial in leadership?



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THE FRUIT OF TEMPERANCE

Galatians 5

Introduction

1. As we wind down this series on the fruit of the Spirit, I want to remind us all that this fruit really is simply a description of Jesus Christ. As I am filled with the fruit of the Spirit, it's Jesus living through me! It is Christ being formed in us.

2. But there is something that will sabotage us from experiencing all this wonderful fruit in our lives. It is when we allow fleshly passions and desires to control our lives.

Galatians 5:16-17a

3. That is why this last fruit deals with this issue of **controlling** fleshly lusts. Can anybody relate to this struggle that Paul talked about in Romans 7:18-23? He's talking about the struggle in his flesh.

4. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul likens the Christian life to running a race (against Satan), and we're trying to reach people and have our lives make a positive impact on people with the good news of Christ. He ends with this thought. Vs. 27

5. He is speaking here of the fleshly passions that can arise in our bodies and take us out of the race! He knew that if **they** had control, they would end up destroying him - sabotaging all of his efforts to live a profitable life for Christ.

6. He talks about the need for temperance (self-control) in this context (vs. 25 - illustration of an athlete exercising temperance to win the crown).

7. Temperance is the final fruit that we want to study and learn about and begin praying for.

What is Temperance?

1. This isn't a word we use a lot today. Webster's defines it as "moderation in action, thought, or feeling: restraint." Another secondary definition they give is "habitual moderation in the indulgence of the appetites or passions."

2. Temperance means that you are able to **control** fleshly desires.
3. This is why many versions use the word "self-control." When you are temperate you **are** controlling those lustful passions of your flesh. However, we will learn that YOU cannot control your fleshly and lustful passions (Romans 7) - only Christ's Spirit can do that in and through you.
4. If you are going to be temperate, it will be **Spirit** control. It may look to others like self-control, but it is actually the Holy Spirit working in you and strengthening you.
5. When you are **filled** with the Spirit, you are **controlled** by the Spirit, as opposed to being controlled by something else.
6. We don't use the word temperance a lot today, but we do use a word within that word... the word "temper." That might help us understand the word temperance.
7. Ever hear this? "You're always losing your temper." What we mean is, he loses his temperance. He loses control. "At work, my boss lost it (control)."
8. The fruit of temperance means that we do not allow **anything** in life to control us, dominate us, or enslave us.
9. Why do people get addicted to substances? It is a lack of this fruit of temperance. Why do people become enslaved to lustful passions and become slaves to sex, pornography, perversions, and lustful passions. It's a lack of this fruit - temperance (lost control).
10. In Galatians 5, right before he tells us the fruit of the Spirit, he lists some of the works of the flesh. They are what we can produce apart from Christ.
11. The first things he lists are adultery, sexual immorality, impurity, and lewdness. All of this deals with sexual sin. And then he mentions things like rage, anger, drunkenness, carousing (partying), etc.
12. Those things are obviously destructive, but too much of even **good** things can cause us to lose our moderation and to allow things to spin out of control or get completely out of balance (working, eating, sleeping, sports, video games, social media, shopping and spending, television and movies, etc.).
13. When we lack temperance it means we have lost control over certain areas of our lives. We have lost our ability to reign these things in and take control of them.

The fruit of temperance means that we do not allow anything in life to control us, dominate us, or enslave us.

Two Examples

1. King David. **2 Samuel 11**

- David loved God and had served God for a number of years. But David allowed sexual lust and passion to control him. He lusted after a woman who was not his wife, got her pregnant, and then had her husband killed in battle.
- David's lack of temperance cost him dearly. Basically his family and his kingdom were eventually torn apart because of his sin.
- David's son, Amnon, had such uncontrolled lust for his step-sister Tamar, that it drove reason from his brain, and he raped her. David had set an example of not controlling his sexual passion when he gave in to his lust for Bathsheba.
- This was just the beginning of the fallout after David's lack of temperance. Another son rebelled against him and died tragically. The baby he had with Bathsheba died. David was a shell of the man he once was and went through incredible guilt and depression. A lack of temperance brought **destruction**.

2. Joseph. **Genesis 39**

- Joseph worked for Potiphar, and God blessed his work greatly. Joseph truly loved God and desired to please God. But sexual temptation came knocking at his door.
- Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph. This could not only bring sexual pleasure, but could also help Joseph work-wise and cause him to advance further.
- Nobody would know. Everybody else was gone. It was just him and her. The world says that sex is no big deal.
- Obviously Joseph did not agree! He refused, and then fled from the house and away from her, from lust, and from sexual sin. He exercised temperance.
- There were some detours along the way, but eventually God took Joseph from being a servant to an officer in Egypt, to being the right-hand man of the king of all of Egypt. Nobody, other than the king, was higher up than Joseph. Temperance brought **blessing**.

What was the difference?

1. So here we have two examples. One story ended in tragedy, heartbreak, and destruction. The other ended with joy, peace, prosperity, and blessing.
2. What was the difference? Temperance - controlling those fleshly desires that arise in our bodies.
3. Are you on the Joseph path or the David path? **Romans 8:6**

Are there any fleshly actions where you feel that you have lost control (temperance)? What has been the result?



Are there any good things where you have lost moderation or balance (working, eating, shopping, spending, sports, social media, etc.)?



Has God revealed some areas in your life that need to change? What is your plan for change?



Why is temperance necessary?

1. Obviously God believes this to be crucial in our relationship with Him. It made this list of the fruit of the Spirit. This isn't the only place it's mentioned though.
 - Peter lists temperance as a key element in our Christian walk. **2 Peter 1:5-8**
 - Paul lists it as essential for Christian leadership. **Titus 1:8, 2:2**
 - And Paul uses it to illustrate the commitment of an athlete to win a race or sporting event. **1 Corinthians 9:25**
2. So why is this thing of temperance or maintaining control so important? Because without it, we become enslaved to other things and can't be the servant of Christ (or effective servant) - Jesus said that you cannot serve two masters. **Matthew 6:24**
 - It can hinder all the other wonderful fruit of the Spirit. **Romans 8:6**
 - It can hinder our relationship with God (can't serve two masters). **Romans 8:7-8**
 - It can potentially destroy everything good in our lives. **Romans 8:13** cf. **Galatians 6:8**

How do we grow the fruit of temperance in our lives?

1. It starts with a decision. **Romans 6:11**
 - Nobody changes that doesn't want to change. If you are content with the present arrangement in your life, with whatever it is controlling you and lording over you, Satan is very content for you to continue on that way. He likes the arrangement too! You can't serve two masters, and he knows that. He doesn't care if you claim to be a Christian and go to church.
 - Other people can even call you out, but it won't create any lasting change until you call yourself out and make a decision to get it back on track.
 - Romans 6:11 - the word "*consider*" is a mathematical type of word that carries the idea "to compute, to calculate, to take an inventory." It also means "to think and make up your mind about something."
 - And the context has to do with sin and areas of disobedience in our lives. We have to choose and make up our minds. Nothing will change until a decision is made.

- Circumstances will not change it, and you will not grow out of it. Sins of the flesh - you do not grow out of them. You repent out of them (completely change your thinking).
- You may grow gradually out of high blood pressure over time. You exercise, lose weight, change your diet, etc. But if you have a huge cancerous mass in you, you get radical, and they cut it out. You don't grow gradually out of that situation.
- Sins of the flesh are like the cancerous mass - you deal with them radically and cut them out.
- You won't change, and you won't seek help until you make a firm decision.
- Once you make that decision, tell somebody. Why? Accountability. When you verbalize it to somebody else, it goes from an idea to a firm decision. Tell that person you want them to hold you accountable and set up some accountability measures.
- **For example:** If you have a spending addiction, this person sees your credit card bill each month or maybe even sees it each day. If you have a pornography problem, another person gets a report of every web site you visit. If you have a substance or alcohol addiction, it may mean you check yourself into a rehab.

2. It takes total surrender. **Romans 6:12-13, 12:1-2**

- You have to be all in. It can't be, "I am going to try and do better," or "I will taper off." This is a recipe for failure.
- You have to hate your sin (**Romans 12:9**). Until you hate it enough to surrender completely to God's ways, it will continue to spin out of control. Total surrender means that you have to get radical.
- Three commitments:
 - ▶ I will no longer be a slave to _____. It is not my master! 6:12
 - ▶ My body belongs to God, therefore it is yielded to Him completely. 6:13, 19; 12:1
 - ▶ I will eliminate worldly influences and fill my mind with God's ways. 12:2

3. It requires total trust in what God has said. **Romans 6:16-17**

- My heart of surrender leads me to do what **God** is telling me to do rather than what I **feel** like doing. It is an issue of obedience.

- You are either going to be a servant of sin or a servant of God. Either serve a loving God who has your best interest at heart, or serve sin.
- Satan wants you to live a shallow life based on your feelings that are at work in your flesh - he wants you to be a servant of sin. God wants you to live by your faith, resting in His Word - a servant of God.
- Galatians 5:22-23 tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is faith, meekness, and temperance. These three go hand in hand. That is why they are together on this list. Who are you going to trust? Your fleshly feelings or God's Word? With humility (meekness) you have decide whether you will follow your flesh or God.

In Conclusion

1. There are all kinds of forces at work in your flesh to keep you in bondage to things that are controlling you. Are there areas of your life that are out of control? This week let's begin praying about this fruit of temperance. Let's pray that God will help us to control the lusts of the flesh that threaten to destroy our lives or at least ill affect our lives.
2. You don't have to stay in bondage to whatever it is that is controlling you. If you think you do, you have believed the lie of Satan.
3. Jesus said that He came to set the prisoners free. He said, *"The truth shall make you free."* Jesus said that *"if the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed."*
4. *"Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."* **Galatians 5:1**
5. Are you ready to surrender completely to God? Are you ready to trust God more than you trust your flesh? If the answer is yes to these questions, you are on your way to growing in the fruit of temperance!
6. The only answer for this is total trust and reliance on the Lord. **Philippians 4:13**

Are there some areas of your life that are out of control? Have you made a firm decision to change? Why or why not?

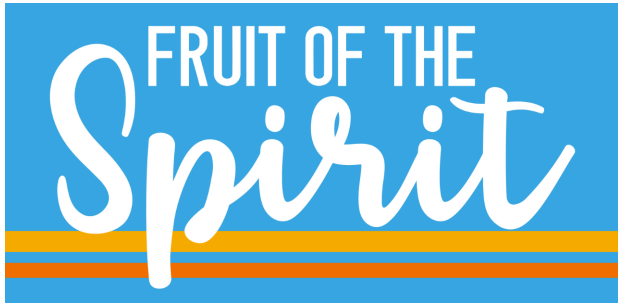


If you have decided to change, who will you tell about your decision, and how can they help you?



Write out the three commitments of total surrender. How does each one apply to you?





FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5

Introduction

1. The fruit of the Spirit is precisely what God wants to do in each of our lives. If we are growing in Christ, this is what begins to show up in our lives.
2. Our prayer every day should be for God to ripen this fruit in our lives.
3. Here are some very important principles that will help us as we seek to have this fruit grow into the fabric of our lives and who we are.

The fruit of the Spirit is not a checklist (vs. 1-6)

1. We all know what a “to do” checklist is or task list. The fruit of the Spirit is NOT that.
2. The believers in Galatia had fallen prey to false teachers that were bringing them under a set of legalistic rules. They were saying, “If you keep these rules, you’re good. You will be saved and right with God.”
3. The list was **not** the fruit of the Spirit! It was rules and laws pertaining to Judaism under the Old Testament law. For example, the Old Testament rite of circumcision was an absolute requirement for men in Israel. It was the distinguishing mark that a man and his family followed the law. Vs. 3
4. This was **very** important to these legalistic teachers. They were telling these Gentile believers (with no history in Judaism), “You have to do this and that, or you are not saved.”
5. This was directly opposite of what the apostle Paul had taught them when he proclaimed to them the gospel of Christ. He taught salvation by grace. Christ has done it all. There is nothing left to do to earn salvation!
6. Notice how Paul tried to bring them back to this and reprogram their minds towards truth. Vs. 1-6
7. Vs. 6 - What matters is your faith (trust in God) which works by love. This is the fruit of the Spirit.

8. Look again at the fruit of the Spirit in vs. 22-23. Notice the end of vs. 23. Paul is saying, "In relation to these things, there is no law." It's not about laws and rules.
9. These are character virtues and you cannot legislate them. You can't make people behave this way. These things come from who you are, not because there are laws to try and **make** you act this way.
10. This kind of Christ-like character does not come from submitting to a set of laws or rules, but by submitting to Christ in faith, living a life led by His Spirit. They come as you walk in the Spirit, which brings us to our next point.

The fruit of the Spirit comes from a daily walk (vs. 16, 25)

1. As we said, you cannot manufacture this fruit externally. The marvelous fruit that we have studied comes from the Holy Spirit within the believer. It doesn't come from external rules. This fruit comes from the inside out.
 - It is Christ being formed in you. **Galatians 4:19** cf. **2:20**
2. Read **Galatians 5:16, 25** about the analogy Paul uses of walking in the Spirit.
 - Walking carries the idea of just naturally, moment by moment, trusting in Him and resting in Him to live through you. He didn't say jog, run, sprint.
 - **Illustration:** When we walk, we don't typically labor and strive over each step, do we? Unless there is a physical challenge of some sort.
 - We don't labor in thought thinking, "Should I step here or should I step there? Should I take a big step or a little step (imagine getting to the coffee shop)? You don't labor over each step. You simply walk in the direction you need to go to get where you want to arrive.
3. God didn't say, "Strain in the Spirit or work in the Spirit or strive in the Spirit, and then you experience this fruit." No, He said, "Walk in the Spirit."
4. Trying harder isn't what this is about. Trying harder to love or to be patient or to be kind isn't going to work over the long haul.
5. **YOU** have to change within (core being) by seeking after Christ and having a commitment to fill your mind with His Word, His thoughts, and His ways.
6. In other words, this fruit will naturally **grow** in you as you grow in Christ and walk with Him daily. Illustration: Fruit grows and appears on a tree as long as the fruit stays attached to the branch and the branch to the tree. Christ is our life source. Abide in Christ, rest in Him, trust in Him, and stay connected to Him.

The fruit of the Spirit cannot be practiced in isolation. (vs. 13-15, 25-26)

1. There are two ways to live life for the believer according to verse 16.
 - We walk in the Spirit, or... you get the fruit
 - We walk after the flesh... you get the bad stuff of vs. 19-21
2. This results in one of two responses (vs. 14-15).
 - When we walk after the flesh, we bite and devour each other. Vs. 15 cf. 25-26 (conceited pride, provoking others)
 - When we walk after the Spirit, we love one another. Vs. 14
3. What is He teaching here? The fruit of the Spirit is meant to be a blessing to others. Think about it, fruit isn't manufactured; it is grown. The soil it is grown in is Christ, but the field in which the fruit is grown is in your relationship with others. Fruit is not grown in isolation. Fruit is grown with other fruit around it.
4. This fruit must be exercised and grown in the context of **people**. It's fruit to be seen and enjoyed by others.
 - Yes, it will bless you too, but it is not designed to be for just self-edification.
5. Just as real fruit is not grown in isolation (not one orange all alone in the grove - no, it's around all these other oranges) - the fruit of the Spirit is not grown in isolation. It is when we are around people and interact with people that we see where we are struggling or weak, and where we need to grow.
 - This is why the church and small groups are so important.
6. But isolating yourself from your brothers and sisters in Christ is not a good idea at all. It is in those relationships that we learn about how to put into action the fruit of the Spirit. We learn from each other, are challenged by each other, pray for each other. There is a reason why God put such precedent on the church, and Jesus put such a precedent on His small group.
7. One of the most important things you can do as a believer is to attend your small group faithfully if you are serious about growing this fruit in your life.

The fruit of the Spirit is meant to be a blessing to others.

8. You can even attend church services and still be isolated. You have to be interconnected with other believers. How else will you know if you are growing in this fruit? You have to interact with people - imperfect, annoying, sinful people.
9. You say, "But I get plenty of those at work!" Yes, but it's in your small group you also watch and learn from believers who are ahead of you in their growth and you can see firsthand what the fruit of the Spirit looks like.
10. And you can show those who are less spiritually mature than you. We are a family! We help each other to grow.
11. All the people in the church services are your extended family, but your small group is your immediate family.

In Conclusion

1. This fruit grows in us as we grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. And it's grown in the context of human relationships. It grows in us as we live in fellowship with **others**.
3. Make this your daily prayer. "Lord today, I pray that this day you will fill me with yourself and cause your fruit to ripen in my life."