

## THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT Galatians 5:22-25

When God's Spirit comes to live within you, He brings presents – gifts and fruit. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are spiritual abilities that are given to those who are born into the Kingdom upon faith in Jesus Christ. Spiritual gifts are different from Creation gifts that you were born with or you developed, although the Holy Spirit can supercharge your Creation gift so that it benefits the Body of Christ. The purpose of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is to build up the Church as the Body of Christ so that together we will “serve the Savior, and save the world.”

The Holy Spirit also brings fruit. These are character traits that are evidences of His Presence in your life. When the Spirit is present you sense love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control, and because the Spirit lives in you, these traits begin to become more evident in you. It's interesting that Paul uses the metaphor of *fruit*. Fruit in the Bible is a positive end result. The fruit of repentance is the visible evidence of a positive change in your life by your changed behavior and your improved treatment of others. The Fruit of the Holy Spirit are character traits that begin to develop in a person due to the Presence of the Holy Spirit. The gifts are related to what the Spirit enables you to do; The fruit is related to what the Spirit enables you to be.

Something could be said about the use of the word *fruit* of the Holy Spirit being singular. I realize the word - *fruit* can be used in a plural form (you don't go to a *fruits* stand), but I started thinking about the unity of the Spirit. Some fruit has multiple parts that make up a whole – like grapes, a common fruit of the Middle East. You can have a cluster of grapes – where several grapes make one cluster. Each grape is independent, but is added together with others to make the cluster. (For many of the definitions of the fruit, I used the Group *Learn It and Live It Bible Study - Fruit of the Spirit* )

1) LOVE - “When we have the Holy Spirit in our lives, the Spirit helps us love others. The Spirit does that by planting and growing the love of Jesus Christ within us (which in turn gives us a greater love for others) 1 John 4:19 says, “We love because he first loved us.” The Spirit helps us to love others as Jesus would love them. The reality is “it's not always easy to love others. We get impatient with our families. We're tempted to treat people at work as mere objects to get them to do what we want, for our benefit. When we meet difficult people, we often want to strike out at them, or at least get away from them. So, when we cannot love through our own power, we can do so by the Spirit.” Jesus left us one commandment, “Love one another, as I have loved you.” John 13:34.

2) JOY - “Joy is something different than being happy or excited all of the time. No one is excited and happy all the time. Instead, joy is being able to maintain a strongly positive feeling about life and to praise God for life even in the midst of sorrows and setbacks.” Nehemiah 10:8 says, “The joy of the Lord is my strength.” Let the joy of the Holy Spirit shine through you.

**3) PEACE** - “The Hebrew word for “peace” is shalom. It means more than just the absence of conflict, it is a positive state of inner harmony and well-being.” This kind of peace consists of three parts: **1. Peace with God; 2. Peace with ourselves and 3. Peace in all our circumstances – past, present and future.** In John 14:27 Jesus told His disciples on the night He was arrested, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid.” Jesus says: In the world of terrorism, I give you peace. In the world of disease or illness from the Bird Flu, to AIDS, to chicken salad poisoning – I give you peace. May the fruit of peace grow in you.

**4) PATIENCE** - “In this world of instant gratification and high-speed internet, who has time to deal with waiting, persevering, enduring, or longsuffering? We are too busy. Our finances are stretched too thin. Our kids are in trouble. Our relationships are not what they should be. We are more likely to demand, ‘Lord, give me patience and I want it now!’ than to practice patience by simply waiting on God to work through our circumstances. Patience IS waiting. But it is also hoping, trusting, having faith, and being content with the knowledge that we don’t have to be in control. Patience does not come naturally to us. It is a fruit of a life directed by the Spirit. We become patient when we practice patience by giving up our plans to God and waiting on Him.”

Practice developing patience with the help of the Spirit. Choose to spend a day in perfect patience (consciously depending on the Holy Spirit for help), then in addition to your regular activities, do at least 1 or 2 of these activities: “Go to the grocery store at 5 PM; Run errands during rush hour. Go to the bank during lunch hour; prepare a meal with children; Take care of business that requires you to call an automated customer service number.”

**5) KINDNESS** – “True kindness is treating the other person as a more important person than we consider ourselves to be. It’s offering cold water to those parched with thirst. It’s providing true justice to those who are oppressed. It’s turning the other cheek...we become aware and sensitive to the needs of others around us, until we feel an overwhelming, loving compulsion to reach out in active kindness to others.”

**6) GOODNESS** - Hershell Hobbs in his commentary on Galatians said, “Goodness is ‘benevolence’ or ‘generosity’...it involves more than moral freedom from evil, but is positive and aggressive as the Christian seeks to be good-for-something. It is being a light in darkness, food for the hungry, water for the thirsty, as one lets the light of Christ shine through him.” When a rich young ruler came to Jesus and called Him, “Good teacher,” Jesus said, “No one is good but God.” Exactly. May the Holy Spirit, Who lives in you, let the goodness of God shine through you.

**7) GENTLENESS** - “Biblical gentleness isn’t passive, rather it’s a deliberate attitude of courtesy, mildness, meekness, and humility. It’s having a friendly and quiet spirit in dealing with others and in dealing with one’s circumstances.” You

can be gentle, but firm in your care for another. Gentleness is a choice the Holy Spirit can help you make and become.

**8) FAITHFULNESS** - “To be faithful is to be constant, trustworthy, and reliable, devoted. It is simply to be full of faith...As we grow spiritually, we cannot help but grow more faithful toward the object of our faith – our gracious heavenly Father.” So how would we measure our faithfulness to God? How often we pray? How often we come to church? How much we put in the offering plate? How obedient we are to Scripture? How well we keep the 10 commandments or even the one commandment of Jesus? May the Holy Spirit help you to remain faithful to God.

**9) SELF-CONTROL** - We are a people obsessed with the idea of self-control. “Exercise programs and diets alone reveal our society’s deep yearning to harness and control the excesses of life...Overconsumption is a problem of epidemic proportions in our world, (whether it is food, material goods or sex). Self-restraint is often given over to living a self-absorbed lifestyle.” 2 Timothy 2:22 says, “Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” May the Holy Spirit be the gentle or irritating reminder to have self-control over the appetites of your life so that Christ is honored in your behavior.

Of course all of this sounds great – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. I suspect many things did change in you when you first believed. But then we put ourselves down because we focus on the things that didn’t change, that we still have trouble with. It doesn’t mean that the Holy Spirit is NOT in you producing fruit – it just means that some fruit takes more time to grow than others; and some fruit needs a little help to grow.

The rest of this Scripture passage helps us to nurture the growth of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. These are things we can do:

**1) Work on weeding your own garden.** The verse right after the listing of the fruit of the Spirit says in verse 24, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.” This sounds like an assumption – that those who are in Christ *have crucified* the sinful nature and its desires. As we place our hands on the weeds in our life that have got to go, God places His hand on ours to give us the strength. To crucify our sinful nature is a painful thing. Our sinful nature wiggles around; it screams and cries, moans and pleads for us to pull out the nails and release it from the Cross – sometimes we give in – and we regret it later. The sinful nature chokes out the fruit of the Spirit. You can’t have both. One or the other will rule your garden. Willfully nail your sinful nature to the Cross – turn from doing things you know are wrong – crucify them. Turn away from your sinful nature; turn towards the Holy Spirit.

**2) Stay close to the Gardener.** Verse 25 says, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Staying in step with the Spirit takes focus and concentration. He moves around a lot in unexpected directions. When you are close to Him, you will act more like Him. When you are in situations He has led

**you into, He will be closer to you and help you. Pray constantly when you are tempted to react the way you used to – stay in step with the Spirit and He will bring out His fruit, He will help you – and you and everyone else will be surprised how you have changed the way you respond to certain situations.**