

The Fruit of The Spirit Introduction

Imagine that you are in a grocery store, in the produce department, and you see the variety of colors and shapes and the smells of items. You watch as customers pick up the plums and squeeze them. They lift grapes up to the light, polish apples, inspect oranges, look at the bottom of the little green baskets of strawberries. Then, they make their choices.

It is not uncommon for Christians to treat the fruit of the Spirit in the same way. Some people are very loving and squeeze love for all they can get out of it. Others are joyful to a fault and spend much time polishing their jokes and their teeth. Faithful people take everything seriously and carefully hold their motives up to the light, and self-controlled peer under the baskets of their actions, looking carefully for any signs of over ripeness.

But like buyers in a fruit store, they sometimes concentrate on the fruit that interests them, without bothering with other aspects of the fruit of the Spirit. Sometimes the really loving person is not self-controlled, and frequently the joyful one is not at all gentle. It's hard for gentle people to be faithful when faithfulness requires drastic action, while, occasionally, the faithful have been known to exercise their faithfulness with such enthusiasm that their kindness has been open to question.

In these studies, we will learn that when it comes to living by the Spirit, we do not have the freedom to pick and choose what fruit we do and do not want to exhibit. All of the fruit of the Spirit is to be desired and cultivated in our lives as we abide in Christ. We will also see that, realistically, under some circumstances one aspect of the fruit may be more appropriate than another, without in any way suggesting that it is more important than the other.

James explored the link between behavior and belief in his epistle, under the headings of "faith" and "works." He insisted that faith without works is dead, reminding us not only that belief behaves but that correct belief behaves properly. The Lord Jesus made a similar point when he explained that people could be known by their fruit in much the same way that trees and plants can be identified by their produce (Matthew 7:16, 20).

Think about it: It is one thing to believe that Christ died for the sins of the world—no doubt this belief affects the behavior. But it is entirely different to believe that Christ died for *me* and then rose again to live within *me* through the Holy Spirit. To believe this is to be introduced to vast possibilities of unique behavior.

The fruit of the Spirit is most definitely the result of inner workings of the blessed Holy Spirit, without which no such thing as Spirit life would be possible. But there is also a human factor. The Spirit life is a product of both Spirit activity and human response. It comes from **obedience** to God's commands to love, be patient, kind, and self-controlled, but it also requires **dependence** on God's power, through the Spirit, to make it possible.

So come learn for the first time, or in a deeper way, how your believing can affect your behaving. May this study of the fruit of the Spirit renew and refresh you, and enable you to abide more in Jesus, our source of life.

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**Spirit Life: “Let Us Keep in Step with the Spirit”
Galatians 5:16-26; John 15:1-8**

Just for fun, the writer of today’s lesson asked two friends, “How many fruits of the Spirit are there? One said eight and the other replied nine. “You’re both wrong,” the writer countered. “It says ‘the *fruit* of the Spirit *is,*’ not the *fruits* of the Spirit *are.*” This may seem like hairsplitting, but it is significant.

If we think of fruit rather than fruits, we take away the freedom to be picky about the fruit we like and the behavior we choose. The fruit of the Spirit is to be seen not as a collection of unrelated fruits that can be selected according to personal preference, but rather as a composite (something made up of various parts or elements) description of our lives. Our all-around behavior is the direct result of a relationship with the living Lord who indwells his people by His Spirit.

Approach Question:

1. Give an example of how your beliefs affect your behavior in a specific way today.

Example: If you believe today that God’s word is true, prevalent and applicable today, that belief should cause one to live (behave) according to what the Word says.

Snapshot: Paul’s writing to the Galatians churches (Iconium, Lystra, Derbe) was an attempt to avoid a disaster. Having launched their Christian experience by faith, the Galatians now seemed to be willing to leave their faith voyage and chart a new and misguided course based on keeping the Law. Here is a watch out for us. Having just completed a 22-week study of the Ten Commandments, some may think all I need to do for salvation is to “keep the Law”. Like the Galatians, we would be imposing bondage on ourselves trying to obey every command and thinking works can save us. It is by grace that righteousness is obtained through Christ.

Paul goes on to show that it is in the Spirit (Holy Spirit, Holy Ghost), not the works of the flesh, that a productive Christian life is lived. Freedom in Christ means freedom to produce the fruit of righteousness through a Spirit-led life. In Chapter 5, Paul speaks about freedom of the gospel and in verses 16-26, he speaks about a conflict and choice that Christians must make.

2. What conflict is described in verse 16-18?

In what ways have you experienced this struggle in your own life?

3. What are the results of living by the Spirit (verses 16, 18, 22, 23)?
4. How might living by the Spirit affect the actions and attitudes Paul listed in verses 19-21?

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5. How do you reconcile Paul's warning in verse 21 with his statement in verse 26, which shows that those in the kingdom also struggle with these sins?

6. Contrast *crucifying* the sinful nature with *living* by the Spirit. How are these two aspects of the Spirit life related?

7. What do you think is involved in keeping "in step with the Spirit" (verse 25)? How do we do this?

Read John 15:1-8.

8. Who is the vine and the gardener, and who are the branches?

Why is this metaphor good one for the truth Jesus was teaching?

9. What is significant about the reciprocal relationship emphasized in this passage (verses 4, 5, 7)?

10. How does Christ remain in us?

Name some ways we can remain in him.

11. What are some of the results of remaining in Jesus (verse 7-8)?

What might result if we fail to remain in him?

12. In what respect is a Christian responsible for the growth of the fruit in his or her life?

13. What is the role of the holy Spirit in this growth?

Homework: Read 1 Corinthians 13; John 15:9-17; Mark 12:28-34

Topic: Love: "Love Each Other as I Have Loved You"

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