

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

I. DEFINITION OF FRUIT

The word *fruit* is a metaphor meaning the result or expression of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian who is in union with Jesus Christ. The fruit is the manifestation of the nature of Jesus being lived out in the believer.

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FRUIT

Nine qualities or characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit are mentioned in Galatians 5:22,23: *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.* The word *fruit* is singular, indicating that these qualities are a unity, like a bunch of grapes, and are all found together in the believer.

The first three virtues are habits of mind having their source in God.

A. LOVE

Love (Greek, *agape*) embraces all the other graces. God is love and children of God are to love. (1 John 4:7-11) This love is life-changing (Romans 5:5), self-sacrificing (Romans 5:6), undeserved (Romans 5:8), and unchangeable (Romans 8:35-39). This love in Christ sent Him to the cross to die for sinners, and this love in us shows the world that we are His disciples. (John 13:35) The classic Scriptural definition of love is found in 1 Corinthians 13:48.

B. JOY

Joy is a deep, abiding rejoicing which is centered in the Lord. Paul says, *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!* (Philippians 4:4) It depends not on circumstances, as happiness does, but on abiding in Christ. (John 15:11)

C. PEACE

Peace is an inner quietness and wellbeing. Through Christ we have peace with God, because our sins are forgiven. (Romans 5:1) We also enjoy the peace of God, the peace God Himself has, in the form of peace in every situation and area of our lives. (Philippians 4:6-8) We are to demonstrate peace in our relationships with others. (Romans 12:18)

The second three virtues are social in nature and concern the Christian's relationship to others.

D. LONG-SUFFERING

Long-suffering is patience, the ability to put up with others, even though provoked by them. This quality does not think of retaliating, even though wronged. (Colossians 1:11; 3:12-13)

E. KINDNESS

Kindness describes God's benevolence towards man. Since God acts benevolently toward us (Ephesians 2:7), we should act benevolently toward others. (2 Corinthians 6:4-8)

F. GOODNESS

Goodness is both a righteousness of soul and an action of doing good to others even when it isn't deserved.

The last three virtues describe the Christian's general conduct, particularly as he is to be in himself.

G. FAITHFULNESS

Faithfulness is the quality of being trustworthy or loyal. We are to demonstrate this quality, like the faithful servant in Luke 16:10-12.

H. GENTLENESS

Gentleness is meekness, tolerance.

I. SELF-CONTROL

Self-control is the quality of victory over the fleshly desires, and is related to purity in mind and conduct.

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FRUIT

The fruit is not produced by the Christian, but by the Holy Spirit. We must work with Him, however. The Christian walk is a cooperative effort between God and us. (Philippians 2:12,13) We must be patient, because it takes time for fruit to grow. (Psalm 1:3)

A. ABIDE IN CHRIST

Fruit grows in a Christian's life as he is joined to Christ (Romans 7:4) and remains in Him. Jesus said, *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.* (John 15:4) Abiding requires the Christian to do three things to bring forth fruit.

1. STUDY THE WORD

God's word brings forth fruit in our lives. (Ps. 1:2; Col. 1:5, 6)

2. PRAY

As we fellowship with Jesus in prayer, we become more like Him. We should pray for the fruit to come forth in our lives.

3. TRUST

We must trust in and depend upon Jesus for everything, even as the branch depends totally on the vine for life and fruit. (John 15:4, 5)

B. YIELD TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. ALLOW HIM TO WORK

The Holy Spirit works within us to bring forth the characteristics of Jesus. (Philippians 2:13) He may use methods such as tribulation (Romans 5:35; James 1:2-8) and chastening (Hebrews 12:11) to make us like Jesus. Don't resist Him or His work.

2. HANDLE SIN AS REVEALED

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. When He reveals sin in our lives, we need to confess it and repent of it. (1 John 1:8, 9)

C. WALK IN THE SPIRIT

The Christian life is to be led by walking in the Spirit, under the control of the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5:16, 25) This requires effort and discipline on our part.

1. WALK WORTHY

As ambassadors of Christ we are to live as worthy representatives of Him. Paul said, *Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love.* (Ephesians 4:1, 2)

2. WALK OBEDIENTLY

Jesus said, *If you love Me, keep my commandments.* (John 14:15) We evidence our love for Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit by obeying God's commandments and leading.

3. WALK VICTORIOUSLY

Walking in the Spirit requires that we do two things.

a) PUT OFF THE OLD MAN

God says, *Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.* (Ephesians 4:22) We must die to sin (Romans 6:12-14) and the old sinful nature (John 12:24). We must not indulge the lusts of the flesh (Romans 13:10-14) and the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). Anyone who does not bear fruit will be cast into hell fire. (John 15:2,6)

b) PUT ON THE NEW MAN

God says, *Put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness.* (Eph. 4:24) He describes some of the qualities or fruit we are to put on in Col 3:12-17.

IV. THE BENEFITS OF THE FRUIT

A Christian's fruit brings benefits to God, to others, and to himself.

A. GOD IS GLORIFIED

God chose us that we might bear fruit (John 15:16) and when we do, He is glorified. Jesus said, *By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.* (John 15:8)

B. OTHERS ARE INFLUENCED

We are known by our fruit (Matthew 7:16), and we are to be witnesses for the Lord (Acts 1:8). Many will be drawn to the Savior by the fruit in our lives. (1 Peter 3:1,2)

C. THE CHRISTIAN IS TRANSFORMED

As the Holy Spirit produces fruit within us, gradually we take on more and more of the nature of Jesus. (2 Cor. 3:18) This process will continue until we go to be with Him, when we will be just like Him. (1 John 3:2) Our fruit will provide for us an abundant entrance into the Lord's kingdom (2 Peter 1:11), and our fruit will remain with us forever. (1 Cor. 13:8-13)

