

Nine Secrets of Healthy Relationships

The Fruit of the Spirit – Part One

Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV) ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT) ²² But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law.

- Today, we begin a series on a much overlooked, but very important Bible passage. In fact, Paul basically tells us that this is a test of our Christianity. If the “fruit of the Spirit” is not growing in your life, then there is a major problem with your faith!
- The extraordinary beliefs of Christians can reasonably be expected to produce dramatic behavior patterns:
 - Those who believe in Christ’s sacrificial death will adopt a sacrificial lifestyle.
 - Those who have been forgiven by Christ will make the choice to forgive others.
 - Those who believe that God created them will have a sense of purpose and direction in life.
 - Those who are convinced of the holiness of God will have a high sensitivity to issues of righteousness and morality.
- James explored this link between behavior and belief in his epistle:

James 2:17 (NLT) So you see, it isn’t enough just to have faith. Faith that doesn’t show itself by good deeds is no faith at all — it is dead and useless.

- James reminds us that belief will behave ... and that correct belief will behave correctly! Jesus made a similar point:

Matthew 7:16-17 (NLT) ¹⁶ You can detect them by the way they act, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit. You don’t pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles. ¹⁷ A healthy tree produces good fruit, and an unhealthy tree produces bad fruit.

- You were created to be a dwelling place for the Spirit of God. Without Him in your life things quickly get out of hand, as your flesh dictates your patterns of behavior. The Bible calls this “the works of the flesh.”

Galatians 5:19-21 (NLT) ¹⁹When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, ²⁰ idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

- The Fruit of the Spirit is not an option, but an essential part of the Christian experience! It may develop at different rates in different people, but it must be developing!
- **The Fruit of the Spirit affects every relationship that you are involved in, including your relationship with God.**
- Here’s what Scripture teaches about the Fruit of the Spirit:

1. The Fruit of the Spirit is produced supernaturally, not naturally.

- Like all fruit, the Fruit of the Spirit grows out of its root, which is the character of God:

Love	God is love (1 John 4:16)
Joy	He will rejoice over you (Zephaniah 3:17)
Peace	The God of peace (Hebrews 13:20)
Patience	He is patient with you (2 Peter 3:9)
Kindness	His kindness to us (Ephesians 2:7)
Goodness	I will see the goodness of the Lord (Psalm 27:13)
Faithfulness	Great is your faithfulness (Lamentations 3:23)
Gentleness	I am humble and gentle (Matthew 11:29)
Self-control	I have long ... restrained myself (Isaiah 42:12)

- We are commanded to produce this fruit in our own lives!

Love	Love the Lord ... love your neighbor (Matthew 22:27-39)
Joy	Rejoice in the Lord always (Philippians 4:4)
Peace	Seek peace and pursue it (1 Peter 3:11)
Patience	Be patient with everyone (1 Thessalonians 5:14)
Kindness	Clothe yourself with kindness (Colossians 3:12)
Goodness	Let us do good to all people (Galatians 6:10)
Faithfulness	Be faithful, even to the point of death (Revelation 2:10)
Gentleness	The servant of the Lord must be gentle (2 Timothy 2:24)
Self-control	Add to your knowledge self-control (2 Peter 1:5-6)

- To consistently live this kind of life is an impossible task without the power of the Holy Ghost! It’s so easy to be overwhelmed by the immensity of God’s character! (Like the little boy who set an ostrich egg in front of his chicken and said, “Take a good look at this and try harder!”)

- The secret is found in THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST.
- **John 15:4 (KJV)** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

2. The Fruit of the Spirit is singular.

- Because of their personality, some people tend to have an easier time with certain aspects of the Fruit of the Spirit. But like buyers in a fruit store, they sometimes concentrate only on the fruit that interests them or comes easily to them.
- Sometimes the very loving are not self-controlled; sometimes the joyful are not at all gentle with those they razz; sometimes it's hard for the gentle to be faithful when faithfulness requires drastic action; sometimes the faithful exercise their faithfulness so enthusiastically that their kindness comes into question!
- If we think about FRUIT rather than FRUITS, we take away the freedom to be picky about the fruit we like and the behavior we choose. Whether or not they come easily, all aspects of the fruit of the Spirit are to be desired and cultivated.
- The "Fruit of the Spirit" is not a collection of unrelated traits that can be selected or neglected according to personal preference, but rather a composite description of what a Christian acts like. It is a direct result of being filled with the Holy Spirit!

3. Gifts show my ministry – fruit shows my maturity.

- SPIRITUAL GIFTS are distinctive abilities given to each believer when they receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, to be used to minister to others and build up the Body of Christ. Some of these gifts are supernatural (operated only under the influence of God's Spirit), while others are natural abilities enhanced by God's Spirit.
- The Bible does not lock us into tight restrictions as to the number of spiritual gifts, or even their definitions. The major listings of gifts given to the church are found in: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, 1 Corinthians 12:27-31, Ephesians 4:11-12, Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 7:7-9, 1 Peter 4:9-11. But remember that the lists of spiritual gifts appearing in the New Testament are exemplary lists, not exhaustive lists.

4. Developing the Fruit of the Spirit in my life is the ultimate spiritual experience.

- Theologians call speaking in other tongues the "initial evidence" of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Up until the time you receive the Holy Ghost, you could say that tongues is the "ultimate" spiritual experience.
- However, there is also a "continuing evidence" of the baptism of the Holy Ghost! It is not tongues; it is the development of the fruit of the Spirit in your life! That is the ultimate spiritual experience – to be transformed by the power of God!
- **Romans 12:2 (KJV)** And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.
- **2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV)** Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
- If the Fruit of the Spirit is the secret to healthy relationships, the key to spiritual maturity, and the evidence of real Christianity, then WHY ISN'T IT MORE COMMON in the lives of believers?
- Jesus answers that question in His parable of the sower:

Mark 4:3-8 (NLT) ³ "Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seed. ⁴ As he scattered it across his field, some seed fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate it. ⁵ Other seed fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The plant sprang up quickly, ⁶ but it soon wilted beneath the hot sun and died because the roots had no nourishment in the shallow soil. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns that shot up and choked out the tender blades so that it produced no grain. ⁸ Still other seed fell on fertile soil and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted."

Mark 4:14-20 (NLT) ¹⁴ The farmer I talked about is the one who brings God's message to others. ¹⁵ The seed that fell on the hard path represents those who hear the message, but then Satan comes at once and takes it away from them. ¹⁶ The rocky soil represents those who hear the message and receive it with joy. ¹⁷ But like young plants in such soil, their roots don't go very deep. At first they get along fine, but they wilt as soon as they have problems or are persecuted because they believe the word. ¹⁸ The thorny ground represents those who hear and accept the Good News, ¹⁹ but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for nice things, so no crop is produced. ²⁰ But the good soil represents those who hear and accept God's message and produce a huge harvest—thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted."

- **There are four kinds of people who are hearing this message:**
- **PATHWAY PEOPLE** – hardened by the influences that they allow to beat a path through their lives
 - Our friends and associates
 - The literature we read and the TV programs we watch
 - The music we listen to constantly
 - The pursuit of pleasure
 - Our personal ambitions
 - Our private thought life
- **ROCKY PEOPLE** – so shallow that they never develop what it takes to serve God consistently
 - Only a “thin layer” of soil – a superficial experience
 - A field littered with stones – obstacles of disobedience
 - Streaks of gravel in the soil – a spirit of ingratitude and criticism
- **THORNY PEOPLE** – crowded by the distractions of an over-active, over-scheduled life
 - The cares and anxieties of everyday life
 - The deceitfulness of wealth
 - The magnet of materialism
- **PRODUCTIVE PEOPLE** – good ground to grow the Fruit of the Spirit
 - People who hear and receive the admonition of the Word
 - People who live in the Spirit, allowing fruit to be produced

John 15:5 (KJV) I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.