

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

Introduction: Life to the Fullest

There is so much to know and discover when it comes to our faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible is full of narratives, parables, and teachings that all command our respect and time in study and prayer. So why spend an entire semester on Galatians 5:22-23? What is it about these two verses, this passage of scripture that requires such careful, quality study? We believe these verses, when dissected and applied, unlock our understanding of how relationship with God works, what it takes to grow in this relationship, and how to make a difference in the world in an exceptional way. You will find, as we venture into this study and look at these fruits as displayed in the life of Jesus Christ, a freedom to walk in the Spirit that will change your life forever. Thank you for giving yourself to the study of God's Word, you will not be disappointed!

Pre-Article Questions:

1. What do you feel like God is showing/teaching you over break and into this semester?
2. Have you ever heard of the "fruit of the Spirit?" Which "fruit" is the most interesting or intimidating to you and why?

"The moment you received Jesus as your Savior by faith, God sowed His Spirit and Word into your heart like a seed, and you were spiritually born again by the incorruptible seed of the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23)." ¹ Orange seeds always produce oranges, apple seeds always produce apples. So it is with God's seed in your heart, it immediately begins to produce more Christ-likeness, more of Himself. Paul's use of the term "fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5, is brilliant, bringing understanding to the direct result of the life of Christ ministered to the believer by the Holy Spirit.

"Fruit" speaks of the open countryside, the quiet garden, and the silent but life-giving forces of nature, something coming from the life that God gives. Fruit is the proof, the tangible evidence, of life. There is first the bud, then the blossom, finally the ripeness of harvest. Underlying each step in the process is the life in the tree that produces the fruit. "Fruit is impossible where there is death."² And so it is with the believer.

"Galatians makes an astonishing statement about Christian freedom: 'It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery'... The goal of our [study] is genuine freedom - the freedom that comes only through a life filled with the Holy Spirit. Such a life displays the character traits the Bible calls the fruit of the Spirit."³ As Christians, we are no longer under rules, laws, and works. Jesus Christ has set us free from the law of sin and death.⁴ But this does not mean we continue to live as we did before meeting Jesus. With a new heart and new mind, as the seed of God is planted in us upon conversion, our very nature is different.

As stated before, apples produce apples and Christ produces Christ-likeness. If we have received His free gift of salvation by faith, we do not live to gratify the sinful nature nor to indulge in "works" of the flesh. "The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like."⁵ We live, we exist, to glorify God; to love Him and be loved by Him, to know Him and be known by Him. The fruit that the Spirit gives us is both an aid to and a result of the process.

1. Renner, Rick. Sparkling Gems from the Greek. Teach All Nations: Tulsa, 2003. p. 523

2. Gee, Donald. The Fruit of the Spirit. Gospel Publishing House: Springfield, MO. 1934. p. 6

3. Moore, Beth. Living Beyond Yourself. Lifeway Press: Nashville, TN. 1998. p.

4. Romans 8:1-3

5. Galatians 5:19-21

In thinking about “works,” words like strain, toil, effort, and even death, come to mind. Looking at our list above, the “works” of the flesh truly are dead. What a contrast to the fruit that the Spirit gives! In John 15, Christ tells us to remain in Him and we will bear much fruit. This word “remain” broken down in the Greek means to “stay put, dwell, or abide.” The key to growing and bearing much “fruit” is our relationship, or communion, with God. We produce by staying put. How relieving that as Christians we are called to be not to do. Our “doing” flows out naturally from our “being.” The growth of love, joy, peace, etc. is the result of staying connected to the source of life. Just as a healthy piece of fruit signifies life in the plant, health and wholeness in the life of a follower of Jesus demonstrates growth in these attributes.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control are powerful traits and our Savior was full of each of these. The Spirit rested on our Lord: “and the Holy Spirit descended on [Jesus] in bodily form like a dove” and enabled Him to commune with and walk in the will of His Father.⁶ We, too, can have this communion with the Father as the Holy Spirit indwells us. He helps us to know and obey the will of the Father, just as Jesus did. In fact, Jesus told His disciples that “All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.”⁷

Moreover, as the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of righteousness in our lives it will not only make our stay here on earth much more pleasant and beautiful, but it also impacts all those who “taste” of it. As believers, we are called to reach the world. One of the most powerful ways to share the gospel is by showing the world the effects the gospel of Jesus Christ has had on your life in these areas. “So don’t give way to the flesh...Instead, yield to the Spirit and allow the seed of God’s Spirit and Word to produce the fruit of the Spirit in your life.”⁸ “Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”⁹

Galatians 5:13-26, NIV

13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. 14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Study Questions:

1. What words come to mind in association with the word “freedom”?
2. Have you encountered the abuse of spiritual freedom in others and how did this impact you?

6. Luke 3:22

7. John 15:16

8. Renner, Rick. p. 523

9. Galatians 5:24-25

Study Questions:

3. Can you describe a time in your life where you really sensed the war between “the flesh” and “the spirit” going on inside you?
4. In Galatians 5:16 and 25, Paul uses the words “walk” and “keep in step” with the Spirit, what do you think that looks like on a day to day basis?
5. The word “works” conjures up all kinds of emotions and thoughts. Re-read Galatians 5:19-23 and discuss the difference between “works” or “acts” of the flesh and the “fruit of the Spirit.”
6. How does Paul’s analogy of these Christ-like qualities growing in the way fruit grows encourage you or help you to better understand the process?
7. In what ways has your relationship with Christ grown since being liberated from “works” and the “law” and walking with the Spirit who is producing this fruit in your life?

Prayer Partner Assignment:

Meeting with a brother or sister from your small group over a meal to get to know one another more and answer a few questions:

1. What has been the best part of your university experience thus far and what has been the worst?
2. Ask each other more questions about family, hobbies, major, future goals, etc...
3. Have you been in a small group or Bible study before? How did it go? What are you most looking forward to with this Bible study?
4. What did you learn from the introduction study this past week?

End your time in prayer for one another if possible and set up another time to meet again outside of small group.