

Contents

The Fruit of the Spirit

1. “By Their Fruit . . .” (December 26–January 1)	4
2. The Fruit of the Spirit Is Love (January 2–8).	11
3. The Fruit of the Spirit Is Joy (January 9–15).	18
4. The Fruit of the Spirit Is Peace (January 16–22).	25
5. The Fruit of the Spirit Is Patience (January 23–29)	32
6. The Fruit of the Spirit Is Kindness (January 30–February 5)	39
7. The Fruit of the Spirit Is Goodness (Being Good) (February 6–12)	46
8. The Fruit of the Spirit Is Faithfulness (Being Faithful) (February 13–19).	53
9. The Fruit of the Spirit Is Meekness (Being Humble) (February 20–26)	59
10. The Fruit of the Spirit Is Self-Control (February 27–March 5)	65
11. The Fruit of the Spirit Is Righteousness (March 6–12)	72
12. The Fruit of the Spirit Is Truth (March 13–19).	79
13. The Fruit of the Spirit: The Important Part of Christian Character (March 20–26).	86

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Introduction

“The Fruit of the Spirit Is . . .” (NKJV)

One day a woman was driving her car. Three police cars stopped her. When the police came out of their cars, they had guns in their hands. The woman was shocked. What had she done?

“You were weaving in and out of traffic,” one officer said. “You were making rude hand signs to other drivers and cursing them.”

The woman asked, “For that you pulled out your guns?”

The policeman said, “Well, we saw the bumper sticker, which said you were a Christian. So we guessed the car had been stolen.”

This silly story brings out an important point: as Christians, we should be very careful about what we think, say, and do. After all, Jesus Christ is our Model. And we should be like Him.

But what does it mean to be like Jesus? How should Christians live? How should we act in public and at home? The key is found in Galatians 5:22, 23 (NIRV), which is the subject for this quarter. “But the fruit the Holy Spirit produces [makes] is love, joy, and peace. It is being patient, kind, and good. It is being faithful and gentle and having control of oneself. There is no law against things of that kind.”

We are going to study the “fruit of the Spirit.” We are going to learn what happens to those who surrender (give) their lives fully to God. We are going to learn how the Holy Spirit works in them. “ ‘People give birth to people. But the Spirit gives birth to spirit’ ” (John 3:6, NIRV). The fruit of the Spirit grows in us when we are born of the Spirit. We receive the fruit of the Spirit when we are “born again.”

Notice, Paul says, “The fruit of the Spirit is . . .” (NKJV). He does not say the “fruits” of the Spirit. Instead, he calls it the “fruit.” This is because the fruit of the Spirit is not separate traits¹ from one another. They work together as one. In the same way, we talk about all the many grapes on one stem as belonging to one cluster (group) of grapes. The fruit of the Spirit is what the Holy Spirit creates within us. It shows the type of person we are to become in Jesus.

The fruit of the Spirit is like an expensive² jewel with many sides. Each side shows a different side of Jesus’ character³ that He wants to create in our lives. This is the heart of His work for us. God’s plan is to make us like Jesus. And He has sent the Holy Spirit to live in us to make that change happen.

1. traits—qualities or features that make you who you are, such as being honest and faithful.

2. expensive—costing a lot of money.

3. (Jesus’) character—who Jesus is; having and understanding the character of Jesus is the same as being kind, loving, honest, and so on. God’s law (Ten Commandments) shows us Jesus’ character.

You will find that the fruit of the Spirit is not an unproven idea. It is not a lifestyle. But a person in whom the fruit of the Spirit is growing will not live as he or she did before. Instead, the fruit of the Spirit is a change of the person from who he or she was to who he or she now is. “The old is gone! The new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV). The fruit of the Spirit is the “new” in the life of a person who has passed from death to life (1 John 3:14) in Christ.

This quarter’s lessons will show how we can let the Holy Spirit make us more like Jesus. He is patience, love, gentleness, and faithfulness in person.

You will have the challenge of making the fruit of the Spirit blossom within yourselves at all times, especially at home. We will find the key to success is full surrender to God. This means we need to be willing to die to self and live for God and for others. Finally, we must remember we are sinners always in need of Christ’s grace.⁴ Jesus loves us no matter who we are or what we have done. We must never forget that truth or that the fruit of the Spirit is just “fruit.” It is the result of salvation,⁵ not the way to it. The way is always Jesus and what He has done for us.

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4. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

5. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life; being saved.