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THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS . . .

Awoman, driving her vehicle, was pulled over by a few squad cars, and, when the police came out, they had their guns drawn. The woman was shocked. What had she done?

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

“For that,” she replied, “you pull out your guns?”

“Well,” the officer said, “we saw the bumper sticker, which said you were a Christian, and we just assumed the car had been stolen.”

This silly story brings out an important point: Christians, by their very profession, are held up to a high moral standard. After all, look at the One whom they profess as their model, Jesus Christ.

How, then, should Christians live? How should we act in public and at home? The key is found in Galatians 5:22, 23, the subject of this quarter. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

We are going to look at this “fruit of the Spirit”; that is, we are going to look at what happens to those whose lives are surrendered to God and who thus allow the Holy Spirit to work in them. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (*John 3:6, NKJV*). The fruit of the Spirit is what grows in us when we are born of the Spirit; it is what happens when we are born-again.

Notice, Paul says that “the fruit of the Spirit is . . .” He’s talking in the singular. Paul is not talking about separate traits that operate independently of one another but about a single reality. The fruit of the Spirit is what the Holy Spirit creates within us; it defines the type of person we are to become in Jesus.

The fruit of the Spirit is like a precious jewel with many facets. Each facet is a characteristic of Jesus and represents a quality that He wants to produce in our lives. This is the heart of the matter. God’s purpose is to make us like Jesus, and He has sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in us to make that change happen.

You will see as we study these lessons that the fruit of the Spirit is not a theory, though we have made it a study. It is not a lifestyle, though a person who is cultivating the fruit of the Spirit will not live as he or she did before. Instead, the fruit of the Spirit is a change of being. “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). The fruit of the Spirit is the “new” in the life of a person who has passed from death unto life (1 John 3:14) in Christ.

The purpose of this quarter’s lessons is not to focus on how we can become more patient or more loving or more gentle or more faithful but on how we can let the Holy Spirit make us more like Jesus, who is patience, love, gentleness, and faithfulness personified.

You will be challenged to cultivate the graces of the fruit of the Spirit at all times, but especially at home. We will see that the key is surrender, a willingness to die to self and live for God and for others. Finally, we will see that all that we do, we must do under the realization that we are sinners in need of the covering grace of Christ, who loves us whether the harvest seems plentiful or sparse. We must never forget that the fruit of the Spirit is just that—the “fruit,” the result of salvation, not the means. The means is always Jesus and what He has done for us, which we claim by faith.

We can let the Holy Spirit make us more like Jesus, who is patience, love, gentleness, and faithfulness personified.

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Got Questions?

Sabbath School University *has answers!*

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In the tiny central African country of Burundi the Adventist Church is growing. But most of the church members live outside the capital city. Few of the nation's leaders know much about Adventists.

One way to reach the people is through the medical work. The one small Adventist clinic in Bujumbura is making a difference. Imagine how much good the church will accomplish when the proposed Adventist hospital is completed in the heart of the capital city.

The hospital will provide more than just health care; it will provide soul care as well. I want to help share the gospel of Jesus with the people of Burundi. I can see how much this hospital is needed and the good it will do, and I'm glad that our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help make this hospital a reality. For me it's personal.

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