

The Fruit *of the* Holy Spirit



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Isa. 53:3, John 3:16, 15:13, Rom. 5:5, 1 Corinthians 13, Eph. 2:8, Phil. 4:11-13, 1 John 3:16, 4:8.*

Memory Text: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (*Galatians 5:22, 23*).

We are saved only through what Jesus Christ accomplished for us on the cross two thousand years ago. As Peter expressed it: “But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they” (*Acts 15:11*). Or Paul: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (*Eph. 2:8, 9*). Or Ellen White: “There is not a point that needs to be dwelt upon more earnestly, repeated more frequently, or established more firmly in the minds of all than the impossibility of fallen man meriting anything by his own best good works. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone.”—Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, p. 19.

Yet, no Christian who enjoys the promise of salvation through Jesus can live without bearing the fruit of the Spirit (*Matt. 12:33*), the day-by-day manifestation in our lives of what Christ has done for us. We can profess all the sacred truths in heaven and earth, but the best evidence that we are in Christ is the fruit we bear.

This week we'll take a look at what this fruit is and what it should mean for our lives.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 20.*

Love

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (*Rom. 5:5*).

Why do you think Paul listed love as the first of the “fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22? See 1 Corinthians 13.

A certain type of tree in the temperate zone inevitably and spontaneously produces leaves in the spring as the sap begins to rise in the trunk and reaches out into every branch and twig. In the same way, a Christian filled with the Spirit will produce the fruit of the Spirit—love.

Jesus is God. As there is no life apart from God, so there is no love or virtue apart from God. If a human is going to possess and manifest divine love, he or she must receive it from God. There is no other source. Where else would it come from if not from above? Can beings—who are only protein, carbon, water, or even only atoms and molecules—express love? How can these elements, no matter how finely tuned, ever be able to love? No matter how good a painter is, no matter how perfect his or her paints and canvas, no flower that person paints will ever live or do photosynthesis or grow a seed. Carbon, water, and protein, in and of themselves, can’t even live, much less love. Love has to come from a source that in and of itself knows love and can impart it. And that source, of course, is God (*see 1 John 4:8*).

A crucial question, though, needs to be answered: What do we mean by “love”? The word itself has been so broadened and, hence, cheapened until it covers a multitude of acts and emotions that hardly do justice to the term. Scripture, however, gives verses that help us understand the biblical concept of love as a fruit of the Spirit.

Read John 3:16, 15:13, and 1 John 3:16. What’s the crucial factor here that helps us understand the nature of love, as depicted in the Scriptures? How, too, does this idea help us understand why “the love of God . . . shed abroad in our hearts” (*Rom. 5:5*) comes from the Holy Spirit?

Joy and Peace

The idea of joy and peace as fruit of the Spirit (*Gal. 5:22, 23*) is susceptible to misinterpretation. Our world is a sinful world; we are sinful beings, each one of us suffering the effects of sin: sickness, loss, separation, fear, worry, uncertainty . . . the list goes on. No one, even a Christian, is immune to the painful struggles that afflict us in a fallen world. Jesus suffered; we are going to, as well.

And yet, as Christians, there should be a difference. Unlike many people who attribute pain and suffering to the mindless and purposeless forces of nature or to pure chance or to anger of evil spirits, we should, day by day, live with the constant knowledge that we serve not only a living God but a loving God and that this God not only knows our troubles but loves and cares about us and our woes. After all, as a human, He has known plenty of woe Himself (*Isa. 53:3, Mark 15:15, John 11:35, Heb. 4:15, 1 Pet. 4:1*). Thus, we can know that whatever happens, if we stay faithful, whatever our mistakes, whatever our shortcomings, God loves us and promises to see us through it all. God also promises us an eternity in bliss. This realization should give us joy and peace that will enable us to better endure whatever difficult circumstances we find ourselves in now.

We must remember, too, that as fruit of the Spirit, joy and peace aren't the same as always feeling happy; instead, joy and peace are what comes from knowing—even though we aren't feeling happy or if circumstances aren't good—that God is close and promises to get us through whatever happens.

How do the following texts help us understand why we should have, if not always happiness, joy and peace in our lives as Christians, regardless of our tight circumstances? *Matt. 6:31, 32; Rom. 8:28; Phil. 4:11-13; 1 John 4:8; Rev. 21:4.*

Dwell on the above texts (and any other relevant ones you can think of). If you know anyone who is struggling right now, share these texts with that person.

Long-Suffering

Another one of the “fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5 is “longsuffering.” It comes from a Greek word that means, basically, “patience,” “endurance,” “constancy,” “steadfastness,” and “slowness in avenging wrongs.”

In what ways is the practice of long-suffering a reflection of the character of God? *Exod. 34:6, Rom. 2:4.*

How do the following examples reveal to us the long-suffering of God?

Gen. 15:16

Isa. 5:1-5

Hos. 11:8

Rev. 2:21

“Long-suffering bears something, yea, many things, without seeking to be avenged by word or act.

“‘Long-suffering’ is patience with offence; long endurance. If you are long-suffering, you will not impart to others your supposed knowledge of your brother’s mistakes and errors. You will seek to help and save him because he has been purchased with the blood of Christ. . . . To be long-suffering is not to be gloomy and sad, sour and hardhearted; it is to be exactly the opposite.”—Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, p. 52.

Our patience and long-suffering with others should stem, at least partly, from our realization of God’s patience and long-suffering with us. Imagine if God treated each of us as we often treat one another! Fortunately He doesn’t, and the fact that He is exceedingly patient with us and our faults means we should be patient with others and their faults. As we look in the mirror and see ourselves for what we are and know that God loves and endures with us despite what we see in the mirror, we will be better able to truly manifest this fruit of long-suffering. In and of ourselves, we can’t do it; only as we surrender our will to God and keep before us the Cross and what it represents about God’s long-suffering toward us will we bear the same fruit in our own lives.

How long-suffering have you been with someone who has recently frustrated you, someone who is “hard to love”? What changes do you need to make in order to treat him or her as Christ treats you? What’s the only way to be able to do it?

Gentleness and Goodness

Write out your definition of what you understand as “gentleness and goodness.” What is a person like who reflects these two fruit of the Spirit?

It’s interesting, too (if you haven’t already noticed), how the fruit of the Spirit all reflect aspects of the character of Jesus. Go back over what we’ve looked at so far regarding the fruit of the Spirit: In each case, these attributes are all found in Jesus. Thus, when we look at Christ, we can see the greatest revelation possible of goodness and gentleness, because as God, Jesus reflected these traits perfectly. Thus, as we can see, the more we manifest the fruit of the Spirit, the more we will be like Jesus.

Go back through the Gospels and pick out one example of where you see Jesus exhibiting specifically “goodness” and an example of where He was exhibiting specifically “gentleness.” What can you learn from each of your examples?

Goodness

Gentleness

If, for instance, you took the story of Jesus’ fast in the wilderness (*Matt. 4:1-11*), you would see an aspect of goodness in His denial of self for the good of others. Or if you took the example of Jesus with the woman at the well (*John 4:5-42*) or with the woman taken in adultery (*John 8:3-11*), you saw an example of gentleness consisting of treating people, even those who have done wrong, with courtesy and respect.

Go back over the examples you chose. What can you learn from them about changes you need to make in your own life?

Faith

Read Ephesians 2:8. What does it tell us about where faith comes from?

In English, *faith* and *belief* or *believe* are translated from the same original Greek root. And that makes sense because you have to believe in something first before you can have faith in it. You might get rich from a job you hate, or you might be healed by a doctor you don't trust—but you'll never have faith in a God you don't believe in. Belief is inseparable from faith.

Yet, faith and belief are not the same thing. *Faith* might mean “belief,” but *belief* doesn't automatically mean “faith.” Scripture warns about confusing the two.

Read James 2:19. How does this verse help us to understand the difference between belief and biblical *faith*?

In many ways the key to understanding what James meant in 2:19 is what is found in verse 20. Biblical faith and works are related to each other as human life is to breath: One automatically means the other. An alleged faith that does not lead to surrender to God's will is not genuine but Satan's counterfeit. No living or saving faith is merely theoretical. Rather, it is always experimental and leads to action. Or, as James bluntly put it: “Faith without works is dead” (*vs. 20*), just as a body without breath is dead, as well.

Faith is a gift, a fruit of the Spirit (*Gal. 5:22*), but it isn't something that is just supernaturally bestowed upon us and we go on our merry way. A daily cultivation of that faith, based on your love for God and what He has done for you, is crucial to keeping that faith. If faith is not cherished, if it's not nurtured, protected, and strengthened, it will degenerate into mere belief and, maybe eventually, into unbelief. The world is filled with people who, once fervent in faith, don't even believe anymore. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (*Heb. 3:12*).

What things do you do that tend to strengthen your faith, and what weakens it? Dwell on the implications of your answer.

Further Study: First Corinthians 13; Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, “God’s Love for Man,” pp. 9–15; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 302–306, 347, 425–431; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 134, 135; *Education*, pp. 253–255; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, “The Beatitudes,” pp. 13–18.

Two other fruit of the Spirit are meekness and temperance: “Moses was the greatest man who ever stood as leader of the people of God. He was greatly honored by God, not for the experience which he had gained in the Egyptian court, but because he was the meekest of men. God talked with him face to face, as a man talks with a friend. If men desire to be honored by God, let them be humble. Those who carry forward God’s work should be distinguished from all others by their humility. Of the man who is noted for his meekness, Christ says, He can be trusted.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1113.

“Discipline and control the mental faculties. Self-control is a power that all may possess. It is gained by placing the will wholly on the side of God, taking the will of God for your will.”—Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling*, p. 219.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** As a class, talk about the meaning of love. You’ll probably notice that it’s hard to define. Nevertheless, what points do your definitions have in common? What can you learn from these points?
- 2** Is there someone from your church who is no longer attending, who is struggling with faith? If so, as a class, why not plan on visiting that person or inviting him or her for a dinner or some activity? What things can you do to help him or her regain the faith that has slipped away?
- 3** Let each person in the class talk about someone, not from the Bible, who exhibited the traits of goodness and gentleness. Do the same with meekness, as well. What can you learn from these examples about the meaning of these terms and how these characteristics should be manifested in our lives?

Never Too Old

Toshiko Kinjo

Toshiko Kinjo, 69, recently received a bachelor's degree in theology from the Adventist seminary in Japan.

Born in southern Japan, she joined a Protestant church while in high school and was sent abroad to study theology. She returned to Okinawa and worked for a Christian mission until it disbanded. She then worked in a church-sponsored kindergarten. She retired in 1996 and opened a day care for kindergarten-age children. Ever the evangelist, she taught the children songs and stories about Jesus. In her first year she led six mothers to Christ through her day care.

Toshiko needed surgery, and her doctor recommended the Adventist hospital in Okinawa. Toshiko had heard that Adventists are heretics, and she refused to read the magazines the staff left in her room. Then she found a book about a murderer who had become an Adventist Christian after reading some literature. His life changed so much that the authorities released him from prison. He enrolled in the Adventist seminary in Japan and became a pastor.

As Toshiko read his story, her careful guard against Adventists was let down. Then she learned that the pastor whose story she had read was scheduled to speak in the hospital chapel. She had to go! Surely if this man had become an Adventist pastor, this church could not be that bad.

Then Toshiko learned of a young man who had committed suicide. Her heart went out to the family, and she asked the Adventist chaplain to allow her to go with him to comfort the family. By association with Adventist Christians, Toshiko's prejudices broke down further. She joined a small group Bible study and discovered many Bible truths she had not known. In addition, she learned many secrets to healthful living. She told her family what she had discovered, and at least one family member has decided to become an Adventist.

Toshiko wanted to share the new truths she loves with others, but felt she needed further study. She learned about a lay workers theology course at the Adventist seminary, and she applied. The school encouraged her to study the full theological curriculum. She graduated in 2004 and now works for her neighbors in Okinawa. She does not want a title; she just wants to work for God any way He wants to use her.

Toshiko Kinjo lives in Okinawa, Japan.