

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?

Key Texts: *Matthew 7:16-20, John 15:1-8*

Teachers Aims:

1. To emphasize the importance of bearing spiritual fruit in accordance with the will of God.
2. To discuss the reality that everything we have is from the hand of God, including our faith in Him.

Lesson Outline:

I. Evidence of the Holy Spirit (*Gal. 5:22-25*)

- A. Love.
- B. Joy and peace—God’s gift to see beyond the now.
- C. Longsuffering—forgiveness, patience, and consistency.
- D. Gentleness and goodness—seeing and reacting to those around us through the eyes of God.
- E. Faith—the ability to trust, rely on, and believe in God.

II. Faith—the Gift and Fruit of the Holy Spirit (*Eph. 2:8*)

- A. Salvation comes by faith in Jesus alone.
- B. Faith is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.
- C. Belief isn’t faith, but faith includes belief.

Summary: Being filled with the Holy Spirit allows us to be like Jesus in thought, word, and deed. Yet, it is not the actions that draw us closer to God but the motivation. We should be living out our salvation by bearing the fruit of the Spirit with the power of the Holy Spirit working in us. If we are striving on our own to bear fruit, to somehow make ourselves good enough for God, then it is all worthless.

COMMENTARY

Introduction

The fruit of the Spirit is the manifestation of God’s character attributes in the life of regenerated believers. This fruit reveals the attractiveness, power, and reality of the gospel. It fosters purity, grace, pleasantness, and stability in the fellowship of believers.

I. Love

God is love (*1 John 4:8*); that is His essential, all-pervasive attribute. Accordingly, the foremost fruit of the Spirit is divine love—love that was supremely manifested in Jesus’ voluntary sacrifice for our redemption.

“[As we stand] under the shadow of the cross of Calvary, the inspiration of His love fills our hearts. When I look upon Him whom my

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.

sins have pierced, the inspiration from on high comes upon me; and this inspiration may come upon each one of you through the Holy Spirit. Unless you receive the Holy Spirit, you cannot have the love of God in the soul; but through a living connection with Christ, we are inspired with love and zeal and earnestness.

“We are not as a block of marble, which may reflect the light of the sun, but cannot be imbued with life. We are capable of responding to the bright beams of the Sun of righteousness; for as Christ illuminates our souls, He gives light and life. We drink in the love of Christ as the branch draws nourishment from the vine. If we are grafted into Christ, if fiber by fiber we have been united with the living Vine, we shall give evidence of this fact by bearing rich clusters of fruit.”—Ellen G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power*; p. 71.

II. Joy and Peace

“These words I have I spoken unto you,” Christ said, “that my joy might remain in you and your joy might be full” (*John 15:11*). Jesus also promised His disciples that they may ask what they would (in keeping with His will), and they shall receive, that their joy may be full (*see John 16:24; 1 John 5:14, 15*). Jesus clearly associated His disciples’ joy and peace with their receptivity to His word, and acceptance of His messiahship. (*See John 14:27; 16:22; 17:8, 13.*) Joy and peace are spiritual fruit that impart the boundless hope we need to endure our own trials and to encourage others in theirs. This peace and joy surpass natural human understanding, but have sustained the persecuted in their most trying hours, missionaries in their most arduous tasks, and Christians in their daily tests and toil. (*See Col. 1:11; 1 Thess. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:7, 8.*) “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit” (*Rom. 15:13*). See also Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, p. 51.

III. Long-suffering

Long-suffering is an indispensable quality for Christians to possess in this world of decadence and perversion, where it is regarded as a mark of sophistication to be “despisers of those that are good” (*2 Tim. 3:3*). Truly sanctified Christians perpetually yearn for more, and still more, of Christ’s righteousness and fellowship. Enamored of Christ and His righteousness, they find the moral tawdriness of this world jarring and repugnant. The godly do not exude an atmosphere of revulsion toward the sinful. Compassion and love prevail over the longing to “fly away and be at rest.”

“Try to live peaceably with all men, and let the atmosphere surrounding your soul be sweet and fragrant. The Lord hears every unwise word that is spoken. If you will battle against selfish human nature, you will go forward steadily in the work of overcoming hereditary and cultivated tendencies to do wrong. By patience, long-suffering, and forbearance you will accomplish much. Remember that you cannot be humiliated by the unwise speeches of someone else, but

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?

that when you answer unwisely, you lose a victory that you might have gained. Be very careful of your words.

“Forbearance and unselfishness mark the words and deeds of those who are born again to live the new life in Christ.” —Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, p. 52.

IV. Gentleness and Goodness

“Oh, we must educate the soul to be pitiful, gentle, tender, full of forgiveness and compassion. . . . The Spirit of the Lord is to rest upon you until you shall be like a fragrant flower from the garden of God. You are to keep talking of the light, of Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, until you shall change from glory to glory, from character to character, going on from strength to strength, and reflecting more and more

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: *Romans 8:28; Galatians 5:2, 23; Ephesians 4:3; 1 John 4:8*

- 1 Why are love, joy, peace, and the rest, referred to as the “fruit” of the Holy Spirit? What does this say about the role of the fruit in our salvation? Why can we not achieve these things on our own? Why are they not the conditions of salvation that we must meet before we are saved? Can others judge our salvation on the basis of their presence or absence? Explain your answer.
- 2 We often hear that God is love, and that all love comes in some way from God. How does (or should) love manifest itself in human relationships? We also hear in Christian circles that love is a principle, not an emotion. What does this mean? Can love exist apart from loving feelings, or even in the presence of feelings that are not loving? Can we will ourselves to love because God tells us we should?
- 3 A Christian should react to the circumstances of the real world with joy and peace. Is such joy and peace based on the assumption that God is somehow going to rescue us from our circumstances, perhaps just in time? Or should we be peaceful and joyful regardless of the actual outcome?
- 4 Faith and works automatically are connected. Is it accurate to say that faith comes before works, or can good works help us to develop more faith? Can a person with no faith to speak of come to faith by acting as if he or she had it? Explain your answers.
- 5 Some of the fruit of the Spirit are so similar as to seem almost synonymous. A closer look, however, reveals that they have subtle differences. How are they related to each other? What common element draws them together?

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?

of the precious image of Jesus. When you do this, the Lord will write in the books of heaven, ‘Well done,’ because you represent Jesus.

“Christians should not be hard-hearted, unapproachable; Jesus is to be reflected in our deportment, and we are to have a character beautiful with the graces of heaven. The presence of God is to be an abiding presence with us; and wherever we are, we are to carry light to the world. Those around you are to realize that the atmosphere of heaven surrounds you.”—Ellen G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 75.

David said, “Thy gentleness hath made me great” (*Ps. 18:35*). He was not referring to worldly greatness, but to enrichment of character with the gracious goodness of God, which is available to all who believe. (*See Rom. 3:22, 1 Thess. 2:7, 2 Tim. 2:24, James 3:17*.)

V. Faith

Faith empowers us to experience all that the gospel has to offer. Christ is the “author and finisher [consummator, perfecter] of *our* faith”

Witnessing

Most people are not agriculturalists and have little idea how to differentiate between trees based on leaf shape, root design, and tree bark. Sometimes we don’t know that the tree is fruit-bearing until the apples, pears, or bananas appear. It is this *product* of the tree that sets it apart from other trees, even though there may be striking similarities in other ways.

Our lesson this week reminds us that those around us are able to see whether Christ *really* lives in our hearts and fills our minds by the way in which we act and behave in various situations.

When your next-door neighbor receives a visit from a military chaplain explaining that her enlisted son or daughter has just been killed in a case of *friendly fire*, how do you assure her that God is grieving too? How do you convince her that He cares deeply about her pain and that, at that very moment, He is present to offer her comfort? When she asks you the question “Why?” how can, and do you, respond to her?

If one day at work you learn that a coworker with a terminally ill spouse has just been fired because of budget cutbacks, how do you show that Jesus Christ is concerned and caring? What actions do you take that clearly demonstrate His presence in your life?

Finally, when your faith is tested by a personal event that comes unexpectedly and with bruising effect, how do you react? Do others see you draw away from the Father, because He did not prevent this from happening, or do they watch you ask for His strength to carry you through?

The great Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is present at times of great loss, pain, joy, and love. His presence in our lives makes the difference, not only for ourselves but also those who witness His influence. Use every opportunity to bear witness to the fruit of the Spirit.

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.

(*Heb. 12:2, emphasis supplied*). The spiritual invincibility of such faith is extensively illustrated and exemplified in Hebrews 11. (*See also 1 John 5:4, 5.*)

“Faith works by love and purifies the soul. Through faith the Holy Spirit finds access to the heart, and creates holiness therein. Man cannot become an agent to work the works of Christ unless he is in communion with God through the Holy Spirit. We can be fitted for heaven only through a transformation of character; we must have Christ’s righteousness as our credentials, if we would find access to the Father. We must be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. We must daily be transformed by the influence of the Holy Spirit; for it is the work of the Holy Spirit to elevate the taste, to sanctify the heart, to ennoble the whole man, by presenting to the soul the matchless charms of Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 77.

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Have your class members share what is their favorite kind of fruit and why. Read the memory verse, Galatians 5:22, 23, from as many versions of the Bible as are available in the class. In what ways is the fruit of the Spirit, as displayed in the lives of Christ’s disciples, a powerful testimony of His presence? How do you see them displayed by your class members? Pray together, asking God to make each person’s witness more intentional and fruitful for His kingdom.

Thought Questions:

1 When Christ stood before the rabble who were calling for His crucifixion, His behavior was caring and peaceful. How did Christ’s mission on our behalf give Him courage to be calm in such a storm of derision and hate? Discuss *long-suffering* or *patience*. (*See John 3:16, 15:13, and Rom. 5:5.*) How does our worldview of the great controversy and our understanding of Christ’s victory over sin help us to live and to serve in a tumultuous world?

2 If you were drawing a timeline of your journey into a saving, personal relationship with Christ, where would you put the attribute of *faith*? Would it show up more than one time? If you drew a graphic to demonstrate the change in your level of faith, what would it look like? Make a list of some Bible texts that have strengthened your faith. Make plans to share them with someone whose faith is wavering.

Application Question:

Automobiles like the Lexus, the Cadillac, and the Mercedes Benz, are considered to be top of the line and are highly sought after. As a preamble to 1 Corinthians 13, Paul says, “And now I will show you the most excellent way” (*1 Cor. 12:31b, NIV*). How does the quality of our witness and of our relationships improve receptivity to the gospel? As a class, what tangible, practical activity will you perform this month to actively portray the fruit of the Holy Spirit?

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?