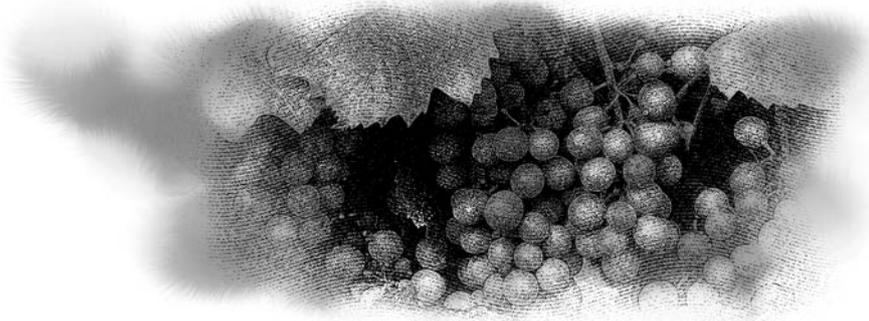


The Fruit of the Spirit



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 15:1–11; Galatians 5:22; 1 Corinthians 13; Romans 14:17; Ephesians 5:9; Matthew 5:5.

MEMORY VERSE: “But the fruit the Holy Spirit produces 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” (Galatians 5:22, 23, NIV).

HAVING THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT is what it means to truly live a Christian life. The apostle (teacher; leader) Paul lists nine different kinds of spiritual fruit. But all the fruits are really just one fruit. This is because they grow together as one fruit in the Christian's life. Yet, the fruit of the Spirit does not show us what a person might be able to do for God. Instead, it shows how the person lives for God. It tells who the person is. All the fruit listed in Galatians 5:22, 23 is found in Jesus Christ.

The fruit of the Spirit, though, is not something we grow by our own hard work or efforts. Yes, it is possible just by working hard to produce what seems like the fruit of the Spirit. But what we produce ourselves is not the same as what the Holy Spirit does in us. What we produce ourselves is like a wax fruit compared¹ to the real thing. Real spiritual fruit is not made or grown by human efforts. Instead, it grows out of a relationship with God. The Holy Spirit connects us with Jesus through His Written Word, the Bible. Then we start to act and think and feel the way God wants us to. We begin to show His fruit in our lives.

DEFINITIONS

1. compared—when two or more things are shown to be the same or different.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO GROW THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (John 15:1–11)

Read John 15:1–11. In these verses, why can fruit only grow out of a living relationship with Jesus? Jesus is the Vine. Why is abiding (living) in the Vine so important? How do we abide in (stay connected to; live in) Him?

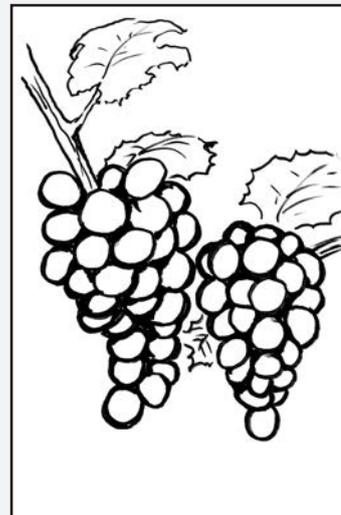
The first secret to growing real Christian fruit is to abide in Christ. Apart from Christ, we cannot produce real spiritual fruit. But the fruit of the Spirit is not forced upon us from outside. Instead, it is the result of the life of Christ within us. In John 15:1–11, Jesus tells us that He is the Vine and the believers are the branches. Growing fruit is the result of the life of Christ flowing through the branches of the believers. The growth of the fruit is God’s work through Jesus Christ in us.

However, it is the responsibility of the believer to abide in Christ. Suppose we let Christ live in our thoughts. Then He will be seen in what we do. He will live His life in us. And the life He lived while on earth will be shown in us. In other words, we will show who He is. Others will see His thoughts, feelings, and actions in our lives.

In this way, the fruit of the Spirit is the character² of Jesus. It is grown by the Holy Spirit in the followers of Christ. When Christ lives in us, we will “live by the Holy Spirit’s power. Then you will not do what your desires controlled by sin want you to do” (Galatians 5:16, NIV).

In the words of Jesus, “ ‘Every good tree bears [grows; produces] good fruit. But a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree [cannot] bear bad fruit. And a bad tree [cannot] bear good fruit’ ” (Matthew 7:17, 18, NIV). So, the good fruit is the natural result of our living relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. We must cooperate, then, with the Spirit’s work on our hearts. And our characters will change. The Holy Spirit will give us power to live victorious lives in Christ. The Spirit will help us to develop the virtues (goodness) seen in those who are God’s children.

In 2 Timothy 3:5, the apostle Paul describes people who “will act as if they were serving God. But what they do will show that they have turned their backs on God’s power” (NIV). What is the difference between a life that pretends to be religious and a life that is filled with the Holy Spirit? How can we know which kind of life we ourselves are living?



Jesus tells us that He is the Vine and the believers are the branches. Growing fruit is the result of the life of Christ flowing through the branches of the believers.

DEFINITIONS

2. character—who someone is. The thoughts, feelings, and actions make up a person’s character.

THE FRUIT OF LOVE (Galatians 5:22)

Read Galatians 5:22 and 1 Corinthians 13. In the verses, why is love the first and most important part of the fruit of the Spirit? How does love affect all the other parts of this fruit?



Love is the first and most important part of the fruit of the Spirit. Love flows through the whole fruit.

Love is the first part of the fruit of the Spirit that gets mentioned. This is because love flows through the whole fruit. In a way, all other parts of the fruit listed can be thought of as parts of love. After all, “God is love” (1 John 4:8). So, the greatest Christian virtue (good behavior) is love (1 Corinthians 13:13). God’s love, then, is the foundation and source (beginning) of every other goodness. “God’s love has poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5:5, NIV). In other words, love is the proof that we are God’s children.

This love is far more than human affection or feeling. It cannot be produced by human effort. It comes as a result of abiding (living) in Christ. Such love is generous and unselfish. We have done nothing to earn it or deserve it. It alone has the power to change our lives. This is because divine love is both strong and tender. It leads the sinner to repentance.³ It awakens the desire for something better. Such love even has the power to unite those who once were enemies (Luke 6:27, 28; Romans 5:8). By our love for one another, the world will know that Christians are the true followers of Jesus Christ (John 13:35). The fruit of love will also lead Christians to be understanding toward others.

It is interesting that the description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 comes right between two chapters that deal with the gifts of the Spirit. But chapter 13 deals with love, which is the fruit of the Spirit. This shows that even the greatest gifts are nothing without love. In fact, the gifts of the Spirit without the fruit of the Spirit are powerless. By themselves, they do not produce the blessing that God desires. But love is the glue that binds all other virtues of the fruit of the Spirit together as one. Love makes everything we do seem true and believable to others.

DEFINITIONS

3. repentance—to feel sorry for having sinned. To turn away from sinning with the help of the Holy Spirit’s power.

What parts of your life lack (do not have) the fruit of love? Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with love toward those people with whom you are dealing on a daily basis. Remember that God also loves us through other people. What are the ways that you can show others love? How does love affect those other virtues mentioned in the fruit of the Spirit?

JOY, PEACE, AND PATIENCE⁴ (2 Peter 3:9)

Romans 14:17 reads, “God’s kingdom is not about eating or drinking. It is about doing what is right and having peace and joy. All this [goodness] comes through the Holy Spirit” (NlrV). What this verse means is that joy is love’s answer to the blessings of God and to His great mercy and forgiveness.

Human joy often puts its attention upon earthly things. It is affected by the conditions (way things are) that surround us. But true joy is rooted in the fruit of the Spirit. It puts its attention on God and what He has done for us. It is not affected by the conditions that surround it. As God’s people, we are to be joyful. Being joyful does not mean we have to smile all the time, even though a friendly smile shares so much joy. But our trust in God will give us many reasons to be joyful over what He has done for us and in us. This is because spiritual joy is the result of living faith.

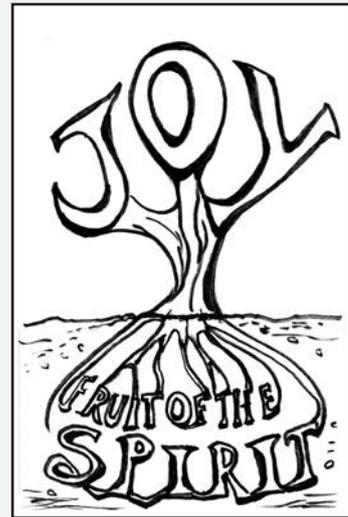
Read John 14:27 along with Romans 14:17. How is peace related to the work of the Holy Spirit?

Peace is more lasting than happiness. Peace comes as a result of being “made right with God” by faith in “our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1, NlrV). So, the Spirit helps us to be at peace with God. Then the Holy Spirit leads us to be peaceful and patient toward others. And “the God of peace will be with [us]” (Philippians 4:9, NKJV) through the Holy Spirit. Then we will not quarrel with others. We will not want to get revenge. Instead, we will want “if possible, [to] live in peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18, NlrV).

Read 2 Peter 3:9. In this verse, how does being patient show us who God is?

Patience is not seen in many people. Patience means putting up with others. It means putting up with certain situations, even when things do not run smoothly. But even in hard times, we are not alone. God keeps us strong through His Holy Spirit. He builds patience in us. And being patient is a sign in the end time of being a believer (Revelation 14:12). Learning to be patient, then, is a worthy goal. Those who truly try to show patience will learn to be patient.

Joy, peace, and patience—how much of this fruit do you experience in your life? Which one of these do you need more of in your life?



Joy is rooted in the fruit of the Spirit.

DEFINITIONS

4. patience—the ability to wait; the desire to be willing to wait.

BEING KIND, GOOD, AND FAITHFUL (1 Corinthians 13:4)

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4. Why do people appreciate true kindness in others? Where do you find God’s kindness in His dealings with people?



God treats us as a loving father treats his learning child.

“Kindness” is the word often used to describe what God shows to His people. Kindness also describes what we show to others when they fail. God has every right to be quite harsh with us in dealing with our faults. Instead, He treats us as a loving father would treat a learning child (Hosea 11:1–4). We must remember this, because perhaps nothing destroys the power of our Christian influence and witness more than our being unkind to others. It does not cost money to be kind. But kindness can open the door to the heart of a person. We may need to be very firm when we punish someone or tell this person that he or she is wrong. But we need not become unkind.

Read Ephesians 5:9. What, in this verse, goes along with goodness?

Goodness is love in action. The goodness that grows in us as the fruit of the Spirit also includes works and acts of goodness. It is shown to others every day in useful works of love. But first the Holy Spirit must live in us. Then goodness will flow out of us to the people we meet every day.

Read Galatians 5:22. In this verse, why is it important to be faithful in our Christian walk with God? And why is it important for others to be able to trust us?

The Holy Spirit lives inside us and makes us faithful. Then others feel that they can trust us. Being faithful means being someone others can trust or count on. Those who are faithful do what they promise to do. After all, Jesus was faithful. He is even called “the faithful witness” (Revelation 1:5). And God the Father is faithful. He keeps His promises and is faithful in what He does (1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; 2 Thessalonians 3:3). So, when we are faithful, we show God in our lives. “The great results we achieve are not so important to God. What is important to Him is the reason behind our actions and works. He prizes what is good and faithful in us. He prizes these two things more than He prizes the great result of our work.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*⁵ for the Church, volume 2, pages 510, 511.

DEFINITIONS

5. Testimonies—the writings of Ellen G. White.

BEING GENTLE AND HAVING CONTROL OF ONESELF (Matthew 5:5)

Read Galatians 5:23 and Matthew 5:5. According to these verses, why is it so important for a Christian leader to be gentle or meek?⁶

Being gentle or meek does not mean being weak. Being meek does not mean being a coward or being a bad leader. Moses was called the meekest (the most gentle and humble [not proud]) man on earth (Numbers 12:3). And he was a powerful leader of God's people. We must remember though, that meek people are not loud and noisy. They do not quarrel. They are not selfish or forceful. Instead, they serve in a gentle spirit. In this way, being meek is the outward sign of an inner faith and trust in the power of God working in us. Often, those who are loud, forceful, and seem sure of themselves are covering up their weaknesses and fears.

Read Galatians 5:23 and Proverbs 16:32. What blessings do we gain if we have control over our lives? What misery comes when we do not control ourselves?

The last part of the fruit of the Spirit is control over oneself, or self-control. We all need self-control. We all struggle with the need for control in our lives. Before one can rule a city, a community, or a church, one has to be able to control his or her own spirit. True self-control is control not only over food and drink. It is control over every part of life.

Being like Christ in every way is what really counts in the life of a believer. The fruit of the Spirit is the sign that we belong to Christ. It brings all believers together as one in Christ.

Think about the parts of your life in which you could have more self-control. Maybe you have control over one part of your life. But you may not have as much control over another part. Control over life comes through the power of God. Why is it important to have this control in every part of your life?

DEFINITIONS

6. meek—not being proud; being humble.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “In today’s language the verses in Galatians 5:22, 23 could be put into the following words: ‘The Fruit of the Spirit is warm-hearted. It is loving. It shines with joy and happiness. It has a calm mind and a humble [not proud] way of speaking and doing things. It is very patient with difficult people and in difficult situations. It shows sympathy to others. It is helpful and generous and shows good judgment. It has a big heart. It is loyal and true. It can be trusted at all times. It forgets self in the joy of helping others. It has self-control in all things. Self-control is the final sign that we have truly become like Christ. All these things show the fruit of the Spirit. We gain the fruit of the Spirit not by our own efforts. We gain it by living in Christ and letting His Spirit live out His life in us. We do not grow fruit by worrying. We grow it by trusting God. It does not grow through our own work. It grows through faith in God.’ ” —Adapted from S. Chadwick, quoted in Arthur Walkington Pink, *The Holy Spirit* (Bellingham, Washington: Logos Bible Software, n.d.), chapter 30.

“Do not encourage evil-speaking. Kindly remind the speaker that the Word of God does not allow us to talk that way about others.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Ye [You] Shall Receive Power*, page 76.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Why, if we are saved by grace (God’s mercy and forgiveness), is victory over sin so important? After all, is not the gospel about forgiving sin? At the same time, think of Judas and who he was. What did the sin of greed do to him? What can we learn from his example that can help us answer the question about the need for victory? Also, how does the following Ellen G. White quote help us to understand our need for victory? “One wrong thought, feeling, or action, one sinful desire held dear in the soul, in the end, will destroy the power of the gospel.”—Adapted from *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, page 53.
- 2 Why is the fruit of the Spirit more important than any gifts of the Spirit?
- 3 Read aloud 1 Corinthians 13 in class. Talk about what it means. Why does Paul put such importance on the need for love? How can we learn to love in the way that Paul talks about here? Why is death to self and living in Christ so important to our success in learning to love this way? Why must we die to self and live in Christ in order to love those we truly do not like?