

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION:

This small group Bible Study will be topical. The topics are suggested in Galatians 5:22-23 and are called collectively "**the fruit of the Spirit.**" Because our studies are topical many different Bible references will be used. The purpose in choosing the references and setting the questions are twofold:

- 1) to help us to understand the meaning of each grace or characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit,
- 2) to allow us to see the practical application of it in real life.

It is difficult when dealing with a topic such as "*the fruit of the Spirit*" to always keep in mind that these graces are "*fruit*" and not self-generated reformation. The Bible encourages and commands the demonstration of these graces in our lives but never asks us to manufacture them. What we manufacture is called by Paul in Galatians 5: 19-21 "*the acts of sinful nature,*" ("works of the flesh" KJV). If the graces of Galatians 5:22-23 could be self-generated they too would be works of the flesh but, of course, that is not possible. John Stott in his book "**Baptism and the Fullness of the Spirit**" writes:

To live in harmony with God and others, and in firm control of ourselves, this is a supernatural work of God's grace. It is "the fruit of the Spirit." Indeed this fruit (the sum total of these Christian qualities) is the best available evidence - because it is solidly objective - of the indwelling fullness of the Holy Spirit. The real proof of a deep work of the Spirit of God in any human being is neither subjective, emotional experience, nor spectacular signs, but moral Christlike qualities.

The words of Galatians 5:22-23 have been called "the shortest life of Christ ever written," and this is true. The Spirit of God has been given to Christians to reproduce Christ's life in them. Therefore the more we are able to see these graces in ourselves and others the more Christlikeness there is.

Each study asks us to think about the grace in relation to the life of Christ. We are also asked to reflect on the grace as it relates to our own lives.

The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "*Follow (imitate) my example, as I follow (imitate) the example of Christ.*" The imitation of, not mimicking action but emulating character. The Apostle is saying "*imitate my fruit bearing as I by the Spirit of God have Christ's character reproduced in me.*" We pray that the Lord will make this study a positive spiritual experience to us all.

Study #1 LOVE

READ: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 1 John 4:7-21

Love is something that the world lacks yet when the word is used it is often misused or at least used differently than it is in the Bible. Two Greek words provide the root for the English word 'love' in the New Testament.

The first is philia, a friendly feeling or affection for others and agape, the word used when God's love is declared and the word translated love in Galatians 5:22-23. Vine says in the Expository Dictionary of New Testament words that agape is used:

- a. To describe the attitude of God toward his Son, the human race generally and to such as believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- b. To convey His will to His children concerning their attitude one toward another
- c. To express the essential nature of God.

Agape is according to Barclay, *"Unconquerable goodwill. It is the determination always to seek the other man's highest good, no matter what it does to you."*

It is the word agape that is used throughout 1 Corinthians 13, and it is agape or agapeo the verb form that is used 19 times in 1 John 4.

- 1) How is the word love misused in the world today?
- 2) What could be our motive for our words, wisdom or martyrdom if it isn't love?
- 3) Explain how the statements in 1 Corinthians 13:2 *"I am nothing"* and in v.3 *"I gain nothing"* emphasize the importance of love.
- 4) How does love make the actions described in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 worthwhile?
- 5) What positive statements are made about love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8?

- 6) Suggest a reason for the many "it is not" "it does not" statements in Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

- 7) Why is love a characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit?

- 8) Explain why love, of the three graces mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:13, is the greatest.

- 9) What is the source of love and how was it demonstrated, 1 John 4:7-10?

- 10) Explain 1 John 4:12 in your own words.

- 11) Think about the life of the Lord Jesus and explain how he demonstrated love in his life.

- 12) How should we demonstrate love in our lives?

Study #2 JOY

READ: Philippians 1:1-6; 1:12-21; 2:1-18; 4:1-4
Also John 15:11; Romans 14:7 and 1 Peter 1:8

Norman B. Harrison wrote a small commentary on Philippians which he called "His Joyous Experience." The title reflects a theme in Philippians. In it we read about joy in five different texts and rejoicing in seven others. The noun '**joy**' comes from the Greek word "chara" which means cheerfulness, gladness or delight. It is the experience of a person who is in touch with God.

The Lord Jesus spoke of His joy while awaiting betrayal and crucifixion, the conditions did not change his experience of God. Joy is a characteristic of the fruit of the Holy Spirit it is not gained or lost by the circumstances we may find ourselves in. It is the result of the Spirit's work within establishing, developing and maintaining our link with God.

- 1) What is the difference between joy and happiness?

- 2) Do Christians have a God given right to happiness?

- 3) Do Christians have a God given right to joy?

- 4) In Philippians 1:3-6 Paul says his prayer for the believers is offered with joy. What is the reason for this joy?

- 5) In Philippians 1:25 the expression "*joy in the faith*" is used, what does it mean?

How would it be enhanced by Paul's continued ministry to God's people?

- 6) Joy and rejoicing appear to be the result of fellowship of believers, see Philippians 2:2, 17, 18 and 4:1. What is it about Christian fellowship that increases joy?

7) Philippians 4:4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: rejoice." What two things does this comment tell us about joy?

8) What do we learn from 1 Peter 1:8 about joy?

9) Explain Romans 14:17 in your own words.

10) Read John 14:11. What is it that will allow Christ's joy to be in the disciples and their joy to be complete.

11) Think about the life of the Lord Jesus Christ and explain how he demonstrated joy in his life.

12) How should we demonstrate joy in our lives?

7) In Romans 5:1 we are told that justification by faith produces "*peace with God.*"

How does this happen?

8) In Philippians 4:6,7, Paul commands prayer, petition and thanksgiving as a cure for anxiety. The result is "*the peace of God which transcends all understanding.*"

Is it possible to have peace with God and not have the peace of God? _____

Explain your answer.

9) Peace is the third characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit, is this experientially related more to Romans 5:1 or Philippians 4:6,7. Explain your answer.

10) If, as Ephesians 2:14 says, "*Christ is our peace*" why does Paul tell us in Galatians 5:22 that peace is the fruit of the Spirit?

11) Think about the life of the Lord Jesus Christ and explain how he demonstrated peace in his life?

12) How should we demonstrate peace in our lives?

STUDY #4 PATIENCE (Longsuffering)

READ: Matthew 18:24-35; Hebrews 6:13-14; James 5:7-11

Patience (longsuffering KJV) is the first characteristic in the second triad of Galatians 5:22-23. The first three graces, love, joy and peace emphasize our relationship to God, the second three relate to our relationship with people. They are the Spirit's provision to enhance our interpersonal relationships. It is not accidental that patience is placed first. It is a must if any relationship person to person is to exist. This is true whether the persons are Christians or not.

Patience is forbearance, the emphasis in its use in Galatians 5:22-23 is not so much on adverse things but on antagonistic persons. In Romans 2:4, 1 Peter 3:20, and 2 Peter 3:9, God's patience (NIV) or longsuffering (KJV) is referred to. These references illustrate the use of the word in Galatians 5:22-23. According to Vine, *"Longsuffering is that quality of self restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate nor promptly punish. It is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy."*

1) A common statement today is "you don't have to put up with that!" What is the result of this attitude in society?

2) Read Matthew 18:24-35

a) What is being requested by the indebted servant of his master in v.26?

b) Compare v.29, what is being requested of the forgiven debtor?

c) What is the difference between the two creditors in the parable?

d) According to the first creditor what was lacking in the second?

3) Read Hebrews 6:13-14

Abraham's patience or longsuffering is commented on in these verses. List some of Abraham's experiences that illustrate this grace.

4) Do you find anything in your list from question 4 irritating and difficult to handle? _____

Why?

5) Read James 5:7-10

a) Why is longsuffering needed in relation to the Lord's coming?

b) How does a farmer's experience serve as an illustration of longsuffering?

c) Name two prophets who are examples of what James speaks about in these verses.

Try to site specific incidents in their lives.

d) In v.2 perseverance (NIV) is patience in KJV, this word is not the same as used in Galatians 5:22-23 because it is used in a very general sense.

Try to think of a specific case involving people that shows Job's longsuffering.

6) Think about the life of the Lord Jesus and explain how he demonstrated longsuffering in his life.

7) How should we demonstrate longsuffering in our lives?

Study #5 KINDNESS (Gentleness KJV)

READ: 2 Corinthians 6:3-13; Colossians 3:1-17

Kindness as found in Galatians 5:22-23 expresses a certain benevolent disposition toward other people. Sanders writes in his book The Holy Spirit and His Gifts:

"Like longsuffering, kindness expresses God's attitude towards people. He saves them in order that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Jesus Christ."

Sometimes we have difficulty expressing the meaning of kindness but we can readily recognize unkindness. Perhaps a good definition for kindness is *"what is not unkind."* Kindness according to Vine is goodness;

a) in the sense of what is upright

b) in the sense of kindness of heart expressing itself in deeds.

1) We label some men and women as kind. At times when something is done or expressed to us we say, *"you're very kind."* What does this mean to us?

2) What kind of people are kind?

3) In 2 Corinthians 6:3-10, the Apostle talks about his ministry. In v.6 patience (longsuffering KJV) and kindness are mentioned together as characterizing his ministry. Think about the record of Paul's work in Acts and give examples of his kindness.

4) In Colossians 3:12 a list of graces are given as appropriate clothing for the person chosen of God. Review the list and suggest ways in which kindness is distinct from the others.

5) Read Colossians 3:12 again and suggest how kindness is similar to the rest of the list.

6) The following references mention Aquila and Priscilla: Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19.

Examine the references carefully and list the things that demonstrate their growth in kindness.

7) Choose another New Testament character and show how kindness is illustrated by his/her life.

8) Think about the life of the Lord Jesus and explain how he demonstrated kindness in his life.

9) How should we demonstrate kindness in our lives?

Study #6 GOODNESS

READ: Acts 9:36-43, 11:19-30

Also Romans 15:14, Ephesians 5:8-20

It may be difficult for us to distinguish in our minds the difference between kindness and goodness. As a matter of fact sometimes the Greek word for kindness found in Galatians 5:22-23 is translated by the English word good. This happens in Romans as the writer describes God, for example - Romans 2:4, 11:22 (KJV).

Vine writes: *"Goodness signifies that moral quality which is described by the adjective good."* This statement reminds us that the fruit of the Spirit emphasizes the character of the Christian. Vine continues, *"Trench distinguishes between goodness and kindness in that the former describes the kinder aspects of goodness, the latter includes the sterner qualities by which good to others is not necessary by gentle means."* Goodness does not rule out correction of wrong or error.

John Stott in his book on the work of the Holy Spirit writes the following about the three characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit in this second triad:

Here is the patience which bears rudeness and unkindness from others and refuses to retaliate; the kindness which goes beyond the negative toleration of not wishing anyone harm to the positive benevolence of wishing everybody well; and the goodness which turns wish into deed, and takes the initiative to serve people in concrete, constructive ways. It is not difficult to see patience, kindness, goodness as three ascending steps in our attitude to others.

1) Is it possible to do good things without actually being a good person? _____

Explain your answer.

2) We are told in Acts 9:36 that Dorcas *"was always doing good and helping the poor."* What kind of person do you think Dorcas was?

3) What makes people good?

4) In Acts 11:24, we are told that Barnabas was a *"good man"* is this different than *"always doing good?"*

5) In Acts 11:24 we read that Barnabas was "*full of the Holy Spirit*". What if anything does this have to do with his being "*a good man*?"

6) Read Acts 11:19-36 again and Acts 13:1-3, 15:1-41.

What specific things in these passages show that Barnabas did good things as a result of being "*a good man*?"

7) Does Paul's disagreement with Barnabas and his refusal to continue working with Mark show that Paul was less good than Barnabas?

8) Read Galatians 2:11-14; was Paul's action here the action of a good man?

9) In Ephesians 5:9 we read "*for the fruit of light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth.*" We can readily see why righteousness and truth are included but what is the link with goodness.

10) Think about the life of the Lord Jesus and explain how he demonstrated goodness in his life.

11) How should we demonstrate goodness in our lives?

Study #7 - FAITHFULNESS (Faith KJV)

READ: *Philippians 2:19-30*

Also 2 *Thessalonians 1:11; 2 Timothy 2:25; and Titus 3:2.*

Faith is an important word in the Bible, it is the way to salvation, the Christian lifestyle and with a definite article the title for the whole body of Christian truth. But as Stott writes:

Here (in Galatians 5:22-23) it seems to mean not the faith which relies on Christ or on others but faithfulness which invites others to rely on us. More simply, it is not trust but trustworthiness, the solid dependability of those who always keep their promise and finish their tasks.

The third triad has to do with personal Christian character, that which the Christian is in him or herself. Character is the foundation of life that enables consistent action. In our society predictability is considered a weakness. But in Christ the predictability that comes from faithfulness is a sign that the Spirit of God is at work in us.

- 1) Think about your life, job, relationships in the past week.
Did you experience inconsistency, broken promises or unfaithfulness.

If so, how did it make you feel?

2) Read Proverbs 25:19;

express this verse in your own words and explain why it is true.

3) Read Deuteronomy 7:9; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 10:13;

why is it not a surprise to read that God is faithful?

- 4) Although Paul doesn't call Timothy a faithful brother in *Philippians 2:19-23*, what is said that would suggest that he was?

- 5) Read *Philippians 2:25* again, what is said that would suggest that the Ephesian church believed in Epaphroditus' faithfulness?

6) List the things that Paul observed in Epaphroditus which confirms his faithfulness.

7) In 2 Timothy 2:2 the Apostle selects '*faithful men*' as the group to whom the truth is to be especially imparted, why?

8) How do you recognize faithful men and women?

9) Is there one special thing that is always present in a faithful person?

10) Think about the life of the Lord Jesus and explain how he demonstrated faithfulness in his life.

11) How should we demonstrate faithfulness in our lives?

Study #8 - GENTLENESS (Meekness KJV)

READ: Acts 6:8-7:60

Also 1 Peter 3:4; Titus 3:1-2; Colossians 3:12 and 2 Timothy 2:25

J. Oswald Sanders writes in 'The Holy Spirit and His Gifts'

Meekness is the most unpopular and least desired Christian virtue, probably because its meaning is the least understood; ----- It must be understood that meekness does not imply a weak, vacillating or supine nature. It is not the "greasy servitude" of the Uriah Heap variety.

Vine writes:

Meekness is that temper of spirit in which we accept God's dealings with us as good and therefore without disputing or resisting. It is closely linked with the word humility and follows directly on it.

Martin Lloyd-Jones agrees when he writes "*Meekness is essentially a true view of oneself, expressing itself in attitude and conduct with respect to others.*"

Like faithfulness, meekness is a grace of character that motivates a life style.

1) How can we get a true view of ourselves?

2) Compare the above definitions of meekness with pride, how does the behaviour motivated by each display itself?

3) Read Titus 3:1-2; here Christians among other things, are commanded to "*show humility (meekness KJV) to all men.*" What must we understand about God and ourselves before we can be obedient to this command?

4) Do meek Christians get taken advantage of in a fallen world? _____

If so, what can be done about it?

5) In 1 Peter 3:4, meekness (gentle NIV) is shown to be an acceptable ornament for the Christian women. Why is this important to Peter's message and how can it work to accomplish the desired result?

6) Read Acts 6:8-15 and chapter 7. Note verses 10 and 15 of chapter 6, which verse could be used as an illustration of Stephen's meekness?

7) Review chapter 7:51-53, is this outburst condemning Israel consistent with Stephen's meekness? Explain.

8) Review chapter 7:54-60;

a) of whom are you reminded in this reading? Why?

b) could Stephen have taken a more gentle line of approach and thus saved his life? Why didn't he?

9) Read 2 Timothy 2:24-26, explain these verses in your own words

10) In 2 Timothy 2:25, meekness (gently NIV) describes a method of instruction, what would be involved in this teaching style?

11) Think about the life of the Lord Jesus and explain how he demonstrated meekness in his life.

12) How should we demonstrate meekness in our lives?

Study #9 - SELF-CONTROL (Temperance KJV)

READ: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Hebrews 12:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:7-8
Also Philippians 3:1-21

Temperance, the word used for the last characteristic of the Fruit Of The Spirit, has, in the KJV, come to have a narrow meaning. The actual idea presented is best conveyed by the word self-control. As love, the first characteristic of the fruit of the spirit is part of all of the characteristics, self-control is needed in each characteristic that precedes it. It is difficult to have faithfulness without self-control and it is hard to imagine a person without self-control being meek. This interdependence of graces is the reason why the nine are described as "fruit of the Spirit" and not "fruits" of the Spirit.

As we conclude our study with this lesson we must remind ourselves that the nine graces are the "fruit of the Spirit" and not the result of an iron resolve to be a better person. Self-control is in reality God's control of self. We must remember too that self-control is part of the Christian character and not just a random victory over temptation. The Lord Jesus made self-control an important issue when he said in Luke 9:23, "*If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*"

1) Drawing on your experience with the non-Christian world (generally), what are the most obvious breaches of self-control?

2) Are any of the above a problem in the church?

3) Why is self-control so difficult?

4) Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; what is important to runners?

5) Strict training (self-control) is very important to athletes, what makes it important to Christians, v.25?

6) Explain Paul's commitment v.26-27, in your own words.

7) Read Hebrews 12:1-3; what three things in these verses require self-control?

8) In 2 Timothy 4:7-8 the Apostle Paul proclaims a successful end to his life's work. In Philippians 3:1-21 he describes the process towards that goal:

a) What were Paul's advantages humanly speaking?

b) Where did self-control come into Paul's decision to see his advantages as disadvantages?

c) Is there a similar necessity in our lives? _____

If so, give an example.

9) What decision must be made by the Christian before there can be ready development of the fruit of the Spirit?

10) Think about the life of the Lord Jesus and explain how he demonstrated self-control in his life.

11) How should we demonstrate self-control in our lives?