

Fruits of the Spirit

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Contents

1. What is Meant by the “Fruits of the Spirit,” Anyway?
2. The First Three Fruits of the Spirit – Love, Joy, Peace
3. Longsuffering, Gentleness and Goodness – Three Very Powerful Fruits of the Holy Spirit
4. The Final 3 Fruits of the Spirit – Faithfulness, Meekness and Temperance
5. How All 9 Fruits of the Spirit Work Together

What is Meant by “Fruits of the Spirit”, Anyway?

The “Fruit of the Spirit” is made up of nine visible attributes of a true Christian’s life. These fruits, or traits, are spoken about in Galatians 5:22-23 and include: Love, Joy, Peace, Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness and Temperance. They are collectively, not individually, the qualities or “fruits” that Christians should be manifesting in their lives. When followers of Christ live their life by these qualities, the world sees the result. That result is someone walking in the Holy Spirit – hence the name “Fruit of the Spirit.”

Christians will mature in their walk by studying and then applying each of these characteristics in their lives. It is important to understand that these nine qualities come directly from God Himself and every Christian’s goal should be to incorporate them into their own personality. This is not done through willpower or human strength, but by the incredible workings of the Holy Spirit in that person’s heart and life.

Made in His Image

God wants to transmit His own divine qualities into His people to enable them to be the reflection of Himself to the rest of the world. He realizes that due to the faulty human nature, it is only by His Spirit that Christians can actually live out these qualities on a daily basis. He literally infuses the believer with fresh doses of His godly characteristics to then pour out to those around them.

It Only Takes One Thing to Receive the Fruits of the Holy Spirit

In order to possess all nine fruits, one must first die to self and allow Christ to dwell in and show through them. What a relief to know as believers all that must be done is for one to surrender their fleshly personalities to the work of the Spirit in them. Easier said than done, yes, but rewarding beyond words once it has been completed. Once a person completely hands over his or her life - then, and only then, can they watch as His mighty provision of these qualities flows through their own lives and into others around them.

There’s No Room for Anything Less than Complete Humility

This takes a fully humbled and surrendered heart to the Holy Spirit and an awareness of the believer’s intense need for the Spirit’s power at work in their lives. Then the “Fruit of the Spirit” will truly be seen by the world for what it is - a living proof of God’s nature in His people.

The First 3 Fruits of the Spirit – Love, Joy & Peace

The first three “Fruits of the Spirit” found in Galatians 5:22-23 are love, joy, and peace. Let’s take a look individually at these divine qualities of God’s own personality, remembering that He imparts these upon us through the workings of the Holy Spirit.

The Love Fruit

The first one listed is love, and appropriately so, since in Scripture, it is thoroughly explained that without love, nothing else matters. *“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (love), it profiteth me nothing.”* (1 Cor. 13:3 KJV)

As humans alone, we are not capable of truly loving ourselves or others without the internal help of the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit flows and enters our personalities, we are then able to love others with the intensity and unselfishness God intends and models for us. This love will be apparent to others around us in our lives, and will be obvious of God’s work in our lives.

Joy Fruit

The second fruit is joy, which is defined as “great delight or gladness of heart.” In this harsh world we live in with so much sorrow, hurt, destruction and weariness around us, we must remember that only God brings true joy. The temporary pleasures, happiness, and satisfaction that the world gives us are limited and shallow at best.

True, God-given joy is not only available to us, but it is also a lasting, deeply satisfying state that we can remain in while walking with the Holy Spirit. As He permeates our being and fills us with this joy, we are then able to give it to those around us. As the Scriptures say, “Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy *shall be* upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; *and* sorrow and mourning shall flee away.” (Isaiah 51:11 KJV)

The Fruit of Peace

The third quality is peace, or “the tranquility of soul, sense of well-being, or rest, harmony.” Without this wonderful and life-changing quality at work in the believer’s heart, there is discord, torment, adversity, and other unnecessary trials. Peace is real, and the ability to live at peace with those around is possible, but only with the Spirit’s help. “The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.” (Exodus 14:14 KJV)

Sounds good doesn't it? This is one instance where the saying "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is." does NOT apply. And to think this is only the first three Fruits of the Spirit...there are 6 more and they are just as powerful as these.

Longsuffering, Gentleness and Goodness – Three Very Powerful Fruits of the Holy Spirit

While all nine of the "Fruits of the Spirit" are very strong, the middle three themselves are extremely powerful indeed. Let's take a look at Longsuffering, Gentleness and Goodness to get a closer look at just how important they are.

Longsuffering

Galatians 5:22-23 lists longsuffering as the fourth "Fruit of the Spirit." Longsuffering is often defined as patience, a quality that is in dire need in our society today. Just like with the other fruits listed in this passage, longsuffering can only be truly obtained with the help of the Holy Spirit at work in believers. Longsuffering is also defined as "forbearance under ill-will," and "endurance and steadfastness under provocation." Both of these definitions are recognizing that patience occurs out of enduring through a hard time, being provoked, or under someone's ill-will. In other words, patience is not born out of the easy times!

When the believer's natural inclination towards impatience is overridden by the Holy Spirit's flow of longsuffering, the reality of bearing this "fruit" becomes evident. They then find that it is possible to grow more into this divine quality modeled faithfully by God.

Gentleness

Gentleness, or kindness, is the fifth quality spoken of in this passage, and this characteristic works closely together with love. Once the Holy Spirit's transmission of love (the first fruit) begins to become more visible in the believer, kindness naturally follows suit. Kindness is also "steadfast love," "goodness of heart," and "gracious aid in times of need." This is a beautiful quality to have and to show, and like all the other fruits, believers are completely dependent on the Holy Spirit to infuse their personalities with it. Only then will the height of gentleness be reached.

Goodness

Goodness is the sixth fruit listed in this passage, and it is a quality that draws people to God directly through the believer who displays this fruit. The quality of goodness acts like a magnet in the believer to the rest of the world, it doesn't waiver like human goodness can. People are drawn by the visible effect of goodness in the believer's heart, as they feel safe and can trust this divine quality. This is why the Scripture says "...unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living." (Psalm 27:13 KJV)

Goodness also means “love in action,” and, “quality of being good.” A person of their own will cannot manifest this quality because the sin nature goes in the opposite direction, looking out for the interest of “self.” Goodness instilled in the believer’s heart by the Holy Spirit is the only true “Godly” type. The person who shows this type of goodness is always looking to serve others and their needs, and putting self last.

These 3 fruits, just like the others, work their best when accompanied by the other six, which are: Peace, Love, Joy, Faithfulness, Meekness and Temperance. While one doesn’t need to have all 9 in the beginning, the goal is to work towards becoming a true and whole Christian who possesses all of them and lives them every day of their life.

The Final 3 Fruits of the Spirit – Faithfulness, Meekness and Temperance

The “Fruit of the Spirit” spoken of in Galatians 5:22-23 are love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), gentleness (kindness), goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance (self-control). The seventh quality, faithfulness, is a characteristic of God that is established in believers through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As believers lay down their flesh daily to make room for the Spirit to fill the area instead with these divine godly qualities, faithfulness grows inside that believer.

Faithfulness literally means “fidelity which makes one true to his task or promise,” and “steadfast, dedicated, dependable.” This God-given quality causes the believer to be able to be faithful and loyal to others, in a way not seen by the world. Faithfulness instilled by the Holy Spirit in the believer is necessary to stay loyal to God, each other, family and friends. The results will be less heartache and broken trust, which is the temporary faithfulness the world offers.

Meekness – Otherwise known as being Humble

The eighth quality spoken of in this passage is meekness, a necessary fruit for believers to display to others. Meekness is an effective trait, as it causes a believer to be spiritually sensitive to another’s plight. When a believer is meek, they have put aside pride, and are able to serve others out of humility. People will be greatly ministered to through this quality, as they feel heard, valued, and cared about. The Holy Spirit is the perfect guide, as He demonstrates tenderness in the face of life’s difficulties.

Others will respond favorably to the believer who truly allows the Holy Spirit to fill them with gentleness, which is exactly why God gives believers this fruit. By being human examples of the living Spirit here on earth, Christians become fruit producers for God! Gentleness is also defined as “mildness combined with tenderness,” “controlled strength,” and “equitable, reasonable, forbearing.”

Possibly One of the Hardest for Humans to Let Go Of

Self-control, or temperance, is the final fruit listed in this Scripture passage, and definitely a vitally important quality. The Scripture tells us that our flesh and spirit are warring against each other in this life. Temperance is the divinely-given trait that enables believers to battle the flesh and gain “self-control” over the sinful nature’s pressures to stay self-focused.

Operating in this fruit gives the believer lasting victory over oppressive struggles such as addictions, hot temper/anger issues, judgment and critical attitudes, and unforgiveness. Allowing the Holy Spirit to lead and infiltrate in this area will produce strong and visible fruit for all to see, and give glory to God!

How All 9 Fruits of the Spirit Work Together

All of the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23 are given to the believer for the benefit of drawing people to God through them. The fruits are divinely instilled in the Christian by the Holy Spirit, and become part of the actual personality. This is possible through the infilling of the Spirit, and together, the fruits are very powerful in bringing results. God intended for the nine fold fruits to work as a team inside the believer; transforming, sanctifying, and touching people for God.

These fruits work together to draw and invite others to God's love and acceptance. For instance, love, the first fruit listed, is the "gateway" quality – when it is lived out by the Christian, other fruits are enacted. Joy and peace can follow, because the Christian is walking in love towards others. Unbelievers will be touched, saved, and open to witnessing, if the believer is reaching out to them in love.

Goodness, kindness and gentleness are a tight team as well, as each quality feeds into the next. It is difficult to be kind without goodness, or gentle without being kind. God designed these fruits to fulfill and complement each other, and as they are walked in habitually, they become even more effective.

As believers become increasingly aware of the power of allowing the Holy Spirit to flow through them, instilling these qualities, their victories in life increase. Unbelievers are drawn to God through His people, as they see a real living manifestation of "fruit" produced in their lives.

It is important to remember that learning to walk in and utilize these characteristics is a two-part process. God does His part by instilling the qualities in the believer, and then believers must do their part – choose to walk in those qualities instead of the natural inclinations of the flesh. Beginning the new habit of walking with love, gentleness, or self-control is sometimes a fight against the old, self-satisfying way that unfortunately more and more people today are prone to. In today's society it seems far too many people are raised to believe what they (or their flesh) wants is paramount. It is possible, though, with the help of the Holy Spirit and transforming of the believer's mind, for Christians to show others how much greener the grass really is when they follow God's ways instead of the fleshly ones so many around them are directed by.

The Bible reminds us of this in Romans 12:2 (KJV) "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."