

The following notes were not discussed in the weekend sermon. They are meant to bring about discussion and teaching in your Life Group.

God wants you to have His character. How is this possible? The Holy Spirit brings forth fruit in the believer in Christ-like graces of character.

The most famous Bible passage about the 'fruit of the Spirit' is in Galatians 5:22, where the apostle Paul gives us a list of fruit. (Paul was into making lists.) The list is meant as a contrast to the list of the 'deeds of the flesh' found in 5:19-20. The fruit list is clearly not intended as an exhaustive description of the fruit, but was given to highlight the fruit that Paul wants the Galatian church to keep in mind.

When Paul follows the list of the fruit of the Spirit by saying "against such things there is no law", he was talking about the fact that the religious authorities and the Hebrew Torah (law) are positive toward behavior that shows these characteristics. Even an enemy of the church will likely find these qualities appealing. These are known to be positive characteristics by almost everyone.

Galatians 5:22-23 [22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

The fruit of the Spirit is a natural outgrowth of the Spirit-filled life. As much as oranges quite naturally appear on the branches of the orange tree in its season, the fruit of the Spirit should appear in the life of a disciple of Christ. The fruit of the Spirit is not the produce of a well kept gardener's secret. It is not patented or protected by trademark or copyright. It is in the public domain, free, accessible, and available to every believer in Christ.

It may seem odd to think about humans as fruit-bearing vegetation, but even the Old Testament uses this metaphor. The Psalmist saw the righteous man as a tree planted by the rivers of water, *"that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper"* (Psalm 1:3).

Jesus extended the analogy and referred to his disciples as branches of the vine, *"I am the vine, you are the branches"* (John 15:5). It was His intention that His disciples would bring forth "much fruit." Jesus expected growth and that all vegetation should be fruitful.

Fruit grows on fruit trees! In the inherent DNA every tree is designed to produce "after its kind" since creation. (See Genesis 1:11.) Given the right environmental conditions every plant, vegetable, or tree will produce its own fruit. So, is it possible to create a positive environment where spiritual fruit can be nurtured? The fruit of the Spirit is not something that is difficult to produce. It is the normal result of spiritual development. Just as fruit-bearing in trees is a natural response to seasons, sunlight, and nutrition in the soil, the fruit of the Spirit will grow in a Spirit-led life.

The life of the believer should be an example of Christian discipleship, spiritual development, and an

exhibition of the fruit of the Spirit. If others can see evidence of our message displayed in a life of selfless service they will have an example to follow and be encouraged to pursue the same process in their lives. **Romans 15:13** May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 5:5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

All real beauty of character comes from the Holy Spirit's work in us. It is His fruit. Notice these graces are not said to be the fruits of the Spirit, they are the fruit. We all long for love, joy, peace patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These Holy Spirit Character traits are not natural to us, but are attainable as we walk in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:19-21 [19] The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; [20] idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions [21] and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

These sinful attributes are just the opposite of the character the Holy Spirit wants to produce in you.

QUESTIONS:

1. **What fruits of the Spirit do you possess?**
2. **What fruits of the Spirit do you lack or struggle with?**
3. **Do you possess or struggle with any of the sinful characteristics in Galatians 5:19-21?**

Do you want Holy Spirit character traits in your life? One thing you have to do is deny your selfish desires and strive to live a holy life. You must let the Holy Spirit take full control of your life and bear His fruit inside you. We get this essential truth from the following passage:

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

You have to realize that the flesh can bear Godly fruit. You can never attain these things by your own effort. They are "the fruit of the Spirit."

Read these scriptures and answer the following questions:

Luke 6:44 Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars.

Matthew 12:33 Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

QUESTIONS:

1. By what fruit do people recognize you?
2. Do you have thornbushes or briars in your life that are abrasive to others?

Character building is really fruit bearing.

2 Peter 1:5-7 [5] For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; [6] and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; [7] and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. We hear also about cultivating graces of character, but we must always bear in mind that the way to cultivate true graces of character is by submitting ourselves utterly to the Spirit to do His work. "This is sanctification of the Spirit."

1 Peter 1:2 To God's elect, strangers in the world, ... [2] who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

FRUIT TEST

Rate yourself honestly on the fruits of the Spirit in your own life on a scale of 1 to 10. 10 means "this is the way I act today", 1 means "I have a long way to go on this item."

___ **LOVE.** Love is pre-eminent in my life. I see all people through the eyes of Christ. I have a deep compassion for the lost, the lonely, the weak and the poor. I am magnanimous towards those who "get in my hair." I keep no record of wrongs. I give selflessly, sometimes till it hurts. I go the extra mile. I would rather forgive 20 injuries than avenge one. God always comes first.

___ **JOY.** People know me for my joyful disposition even when there is a cause to grieve. There is a contagious radiance about me because "the joy of the Lord is my strength." I remain strong and positive when things go wrong because I trust in God. I am quick to see the brighter side of things. I know that for my shattered plans, God has better plans. My contentment springs from the knowledge that God is sovereign and Jesus is coming, again.

___ **PEACE.** The peace of God rules my heart and mind. I stay calm in disturbing situations because my eyes are fixed on Jesus. With few exceptions (and I'm working on these) I enjoy wholesome and beautiful relationships all round. Whenever relationships are strained or fractured I take the initiative in moving toward healing and restoration. I can see the dark spots in my own life and am quick to confess them. I am willing always to pay the price of being a peace-maker in a world of bruised relationships.

___ **PATIENCE.** I never make hasty judgements or speak hasty words. I am not quick at jumping to conclusions. I am patient with people when they fail or fall. I face opposition and discouragement with composure. I never give up. I keep cool while others are hot. I am not irritable or easily angered. My "tolerance level" is extremely high. I can put up with a lot. I accept people for who they are and not for how they perform. When I confront others, they feel I do so because I care!

___ **KINDNESS.** People feel "love's touch" when they're around me. I am blessed with a M-I-L-D disposition (though, occasionally, I do turn that "M" upside down). I let God deal with the bitterness, anger

and malice in my heart. A deep respect and consideration for others, coupled with a forgiving spirit, makes relating to people such a pleasure! The kindness of Jesus is seen in me.

___ **GOODNESS.** The goodness of God touches my life and then overflows into the lives of others. I am a caring person, a friend and neighbor to many. A genuine benevolence characterizes my life. When I see a need, I respond to it in the compassion of Christ. I am sensitive to the evil and suffering around, and seek to be an instrument of God's liberating touch. Uplifting the quality of people's lives is a major concern to me.

___ **FAITHFULNESS.** I make promises and keep them. I am a man/woman of my word. People can count on me. There is no gap in what I say and what I do. Fidelity is the hallmark of my marriage and other commitments. I do not flirt with the world or with anyone. I am true to the Lord, to my spouse, to people, and to causes that God entrusts to me. They are all sacred to me!

___ **GENTLENESS.** I am willing "to go under" any yoke that God wants me to be SUBMISSIVE to God and to one another out of our mutual reverence for Christ. I freely and willingly accept all that God, in His providence, gives or withholds from me. I am willing to step "under the yoke" with Christ and my co-workers in kingdom service. I am willing to step aside when it is time to do so. I bring myself under the authority of Christ and His Church. I can "glory in my infirmities so that the power of God may be made manifest in me." I bear provocation without being inflamed by it. I give a soft answer when angry words are spoken. I respect my own rights and the rights of others, willing to give up mine if the Lord so guides me. I am a pro-actor not a reactor. I relate to others as one among sinners never arrogantly.

___ **SELF-CONTROL.** The key to my life is self-mastery. I am temperate in my thoughts, words, and actions. I live a disciplined life-in private and in public. I have complete mastery of my body, my mind, my emotions and will, my time, my possessions, my desires and appetites. I never lose control. I don't eat too much, work too much, play too much, or sleep too much: no excesses whatever! Jesus is Lord over every area of my life!

Below are the notes from the weekend sermon.

Why does He send the Holy Spirit to believers today?

Simply this: **HE HAS A MISSION**

Luke 12:1-2 NKJV

Judges 6:15, 34 NKJV

1 Samuel 16:13 NKJV

Micah 3:8 NKJV

Acts 2:37-39 NKJV

If you have **SMALL CHARACTER** you will have **SMALL ASSIGNMENTS.**

If you have **INCREASING CHARACTER** you will have **INCREASING ASSIGNMENTS.**

Luke 4:1-2, 28-29 NKJV

Hebrews 5:8 NKJV

QUESTION

“Do you understand the importance of talking about Holy Spirit character before discussing Holy Spirit gifts?”

QUOTE

“It cost much to obtain the power of the Holy Spirit. It cost self-surrender and humiliation and a yielding up of our most precious things to God. It cost the perseverance of waiting...but when we are really in that power, we shall find the difference. Before, it was hard for us to do the easiest things. Now, it is easy for us to do the hard things.”

QUESTION

“Have you been more interested in what the Holy Spirit can **GIVE YOU** than in what the Holy Spirit can do **FOR YOU?**”