

Yielding Spiritual Fruit

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

The Spirit's Fruit

Love — spontaneous, unconditional activity of seeking the best for someone else; the distinguishing mark of a Christian (Jn. 13:35).

Joy — Being satisfied with God's control over, in, and during all circumstances. It is the result of a loving relationship with God (Jn. 15:9-11).

Peace — Being completely secure in relationships; the result of a relationship with God (Rom. 5:1). A distinguishing characteristic of Jesus' disciples (Mt. 5:9).

Patience — Putting up with others. Tolerance. Withholding anger, frustration, or disapproval. The first defining quality of biblical love (1 Cor. 13:4).

Kindness — Wishing the best for others. The second defining quality of love (1 Cor. 13:4).

Goodness — Activity that shows "kindness." Generosity.

Faithfulness — Dependability. Being reliable and trustworthy in responsibilities and privileges.

Gentleness — Un-provoking attitude. Calm response to difficulties. Not seeking revenge.

Self-control — Disciplined training. Restrain from corrupting thoughts or behavior. Not giving in to misguided emotions, lusts, or feelings.

Note: We do not possess these qualities naturally. They are supernatural and can only be true of a believer. Paul commands us to be filled with God's Spirit (Eph. 5:18). When we are, then the evidence of this will be the Spirit's fruit. While unbelievers may demonstrate these qualities somewhat, they are not the fruit of God's Spirit.

Now that you know these things . . .

The Spirit's Love

Based upon 1 Cor. 8:1; 13:1-3, 13; 1 Jn. 3:17, why do you suppose Paul lists "love" as the first evidence of God's Spirit?

-- According to Rom. 5:5, where does the ability to express "love" come from?

-- What was God's motive for sending Jesus to die in our place (Jn. 3:16)?

-- Read Mt. 22:36-40. Who are we told to love? Are we told to love ourselves?

Consider: Nowhere in Scripture are we told to love ourselves. Love in the Bible means sacrificing yourself for the sake of others; not sacrificing others for your own sake! Love is putting God first, others second, and ourselves last. Whenever this order is changed we are sinning (Philippians 2:3-4)!

Yielding Spiritual Fruit

The Spirit's Joy

According to 1 Thess. 1:6, who gives us joy?

Read Heb 12:2. What allowed Jesus to endure the shame and pain of the cross? Did Jesus allow his circumstances to interrupt his joy?

What do you suppose was the "joy set before Him" that allowed Jesus to withstand the shame and pain of the cross? In Jm. 1:2 what kind of circumstances does "joy" apply to?

The Spirit's Peace

Because we have peace with God (Rom. 5:1), we can have the peace of God in our:

- circumstances (Philippians 4:6-7)
- families (1 Cor. 7:15)
- relationships with our spiritual family throughout the world (Eph. 2:14-17; 4:3; Col. 3:15)
- relationships with unbelieving friends and acquaintances (Rom. 12:18)

The Spirit's Patience

Read Ps. 37:7; Rom. 12:12. How are we to respond to unfair treatment?

One of the first things we notice upon seeing another person for the first time is their clothing. Read Col. 3:12. Paul says patience, like clothing, should be obvious and apparent to those around us. Is patience one of your obvious characteristics?

The Spirit's Kindness & Goodness

Why should we be kind to those who are unkind to us (Lk. 6:35)?

How did Paul respond to those who tried to ruin his reputation (1 Cor. 4:13)?

The Spirit's Faithfulness

According to Lk. 16:10, Jesus said that you will be faithful in large responsibilities if you are faithful in small ones. Is this true of you? Ask your parents and friends if they believe you are faithful in your responsibilities and relationships.

The Spirit's Gentleness

Gentleness is not something we naturally possess. Paul tells Timothy to pursue it (1 Tim. 6:11). Are you pursuing "gentleness," or do you find that others are easily bothered by your responses to them?

When talking with unbelievers about Christianity, are you "gentle" with them (1 Pt. 3:15)? Do they end the conversation more often than you do? If they are ending the conversation, maybe you were not gentle and respectful toward their differing beliefs.

The Spirit's enabling Self-control

Paul compares the Christian life to that of an athlete (1 Tim. 4:8). Our spiritual lives need working out just like an athlete needs to work out (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

- What area(s) of your life is self-controlled for the purpose of godliness?
- What area(s) need improvement?
- How will you make this improvement(s)?