



The Fruits Of The Spirit

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Table of Contents

Forward		3
Chapter 1	Love	4
Chapter 2	Joy	9
Chapter 3	Peace	14
Chapter 4	Patience	20
Chapter 5	Kindness	26
Chapter 6	Goodness	31
Chapter 7	Faithfulness	36
Chapter 8	Gentleness	41
Chapter 9	Self-control	45
Chapter 10	Walk by the Spirit	51

Forward

When you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes into your life and gives you a new Spirit. He is forever planting and tending an orchard or a garden within you.

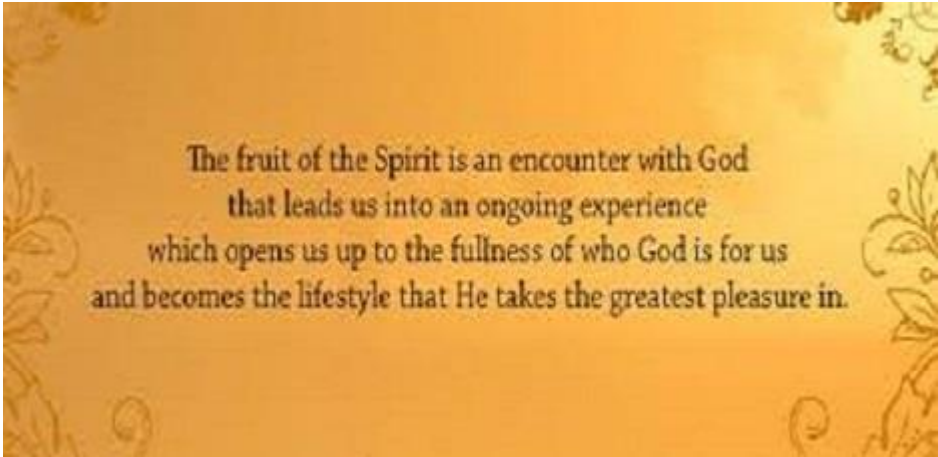
You are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

What will your garden produce?

We find in the New Testament of the Bible a list of things that should grow from your heart and produced by the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Each of these is a characteristic of the Holy Spirit's active presence in our daily activities. As we look at each one, we ask some diagnostic questions to make sure we are spiritually healthy.



The fruit of the Spirit is an encounter with God
that leads us into an ongoing experience
which opens us up to the fullness of who God is for us
and becomes the lifestyle that He takes the greatest pleasure in.

Chapter 1



Love is an attitude of good will and devotion to others.

Love freely gives without looking at whether the other person deserves it, and it gives without expecting anything back.

Question: Do we do for others as Christ has done for us?

Faith in the Lord shows your love.

Ephesians 1:15

For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints,

The Holy Spirit is God's seal that we belong to him and his deposit guaranteeing that he will do what he has promised. The Holy Spirit is like a down payment, a

deposit, a validating signature on the contract. The presence of the Holy Spirit in us demonstrates the genuineness of our faith, proves that we are God's children, and secures eternal life for us. His power works in us to transform us now, and what we experience now is a taste of the total change we will experience in eternity.

Jesus Christ gives you love for all saints.

Colossians 1:4

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints;

Throughout this letter Paul combats a heresy similar to *Gnosticism* (see the notes on +Col. 1:9-14; +Col. 1:15-23; +Col. 2:4ff). Gnostics believed that it took special knowledge to be accepted by God; for them, even for those who claimed to be Christians, Christ alone was not the way of salvation (Col. 1:20). In his introductory comments, therefore, Paul commended the Colossians for their faith, love, and hope—three main emphases of Christianity (1 Cor. 13:13). He deliberately omitted the word *knowledge* because of the “special knowledge” aspect of the heresy. It is not *what* we know that brings salvation, but *whom* we know. Knowing Christ is knowing God.

Your love is in the Spirit.

Colossians 1:8

And he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

Because of their love for one another, Christians can have an impact that goes far beyond their neighborhoods and communities. Christian love comes from the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22). The Bible speaks of it as an action and attitude, not just an emotion. Love is a by-product of our new life in Christ (see Romans 5:5; 1 Cor. 13). Christians have no excuse for not loving, because Christian love is a decision to *act* in the best interests of others.

Your hearts have been refreshed through love for others.

Philemon 1:7

For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.

Paul reflected on Philemon's faith and love. Philemon had opened his heart and his home to the church. We should do likewise, opening ourselves and our homes to others, offering Christian fellowship to refresh people's hearts.

The disciples imparted their lives to others.

1 Thessalonians 2:8

Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.

In trying to persuade people, we may be tempted to alter our position just enough to make our message more palatable or to use flattery or praise. Paul never changed his *message* to make it more acceptable, but he did tailor his *methods* to each audience. Although our presentation must be altered to be appropriate to the situation, the truth of the gospel must never be compromised.

Faith toward the Lord Jesus and the saints.

Philemon 1:5

Because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints;

Paul reflected on Philemon's faith and love. Philemon had opened his heart and his home to the church. We should do likewise, opening ourselves and our homes to others, offering Christian fellowship to refresh people's hearts.

Your love for one another continues to grow.

2 Thessalonians 1:3

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;

Regardless of the contents of Paul's letters, his style was affirming. Paul began most of his letters by stating what he most appreciated about his readers and the joy he felt because of their faith in God. We also should look for ways to encourage and build up other believers.

My love is with you in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 16:24

My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.

The church at Corinth was a church in trouble. Paul lovingly and forcefully confronted their problems and pointed them back to Christ. He dealt with divisions and conflicts, selfishness, inconsiderate use of freedom, disorder in worship, misuse of spiritual gifts, and wrong attitudes about the resurrection.

Problems create tensions and divisions. We should not ignore or gloss over problems in our churches or in our lives. Instead, like Paul, we should deal with problems head on as they arise. The lesson for us in 1 Corinthians is that unity and love in a church are far more important than leaders and labels.

Love brings defense of the gospel.

Philippians 1:16

The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel;

The God who began a good work in us continues it throughout our lifetime and will finish it when we meet him face to face. God's work *for* us began when Christ died on the cross in our place. His work *in* us began when we first believed. Now the Holy Spirit lives in us, enabling us to be more like Christ every day. Paul is describing the process of Christian growth and maturity that began when we accepted Jesus and continues until Christ returns.

Do you sometimes feel as though you aren't making progress in your spiritual life? When God starts a project, he completes it! As with the Philippians, God will help you grow in grace until he has completed his work in your life. When you are discouraged, remember that God won't give up on you. He promises to finish the work he has begun.

When you feel incomplete, unfinished, or distressed by your shortcomings, remember God's promise and provision. Don't let your present condition rob you of the joy of knowing Christ or keep you from growing closer to him.

God will not forget the love you have shown in his name.

Hebrews 6:10

For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.

It's easy to get discouraged, thinking that God has forgotten us. But God is never unjust.

Chapter 2



Joy is gladness of heart. Regardless of what may happen to us. Joy denotes a supernatural gladness given by God's Spirit that actually shows during hard times as well as during the good times. We fix our focus on God's purposes for the events in your life rather than on the circumstances.

Question: Is there joy in my life on a regular basis, or is my joy and happiness dependent on my circumstances each day?

Sing joyfully unto the Lord.

Psalm 100:1-2

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing.

God is our Creator; we did not create ourselves. Many people live as though they are the creator and center of their own little world.

This mind-set leads to a greedy possessiveness and, if everything should be taken away, a loss of hope itself. But when we realize that God created us and gives us all we have, we will want to give to others as God gave to us (2 Cor. 9:8). Then, if all is lost, we still have God and all he gives us.

My heart and my flesh sing with joy.

Psalm 84:1-2

How lovely are your dwelling places, O LORD of hosts! My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

The writer longed to get away from the bustling world to meet God inside his dwelling place, his holy temple. We can meet God anywhere, at any time. But we know that going into a church building can help us step aside from the busy mainstream of life so we can quietly meditate and pray.

We find joy not only in the beautiful building but also in the prayers, music, lessons, sermons, and fellowship.

Go the altar of God with exceeding joy.

Psalm 43:4

Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; and upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God.

The psalmist asked God to send his light and truth to guide him to the holy mountain, the temple, where he would meet God. God's truth (see 1 John 2:27) provides the right path to follow, and God's light (see 1 John 1:5) provides the clear vision to follow it.

If you feel surrounded by darkness and uncertainty, follow God's light and truth. He will guide you.

Shout joyfully to the Lord.

Psalm 98:4-6

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises. Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of

melody. With trumpets and the sound of the horn shout joyfully before the King, the LORD.

This is a psalm of praise anticipating the coming of God to rule his people. Jesus fulfilled this anticipation when he came to save all people from their sins (Psalm 98:2-3), and he will come again to judge the world (Psalm 98:8-9).

God is both perfectly loving and perfectly just. He is merciful when he punishes, and he overlooks no sin when he loves. Praise him for his promise to save you and to return again.

Sing unto the Lord a new song.

Psalm 33:3

Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy.

David, who some believe wrote this psalm, was an accomplished harpist (1 Samuel 16:15-25). He frequently spoke about musical instruments throughout his psalms.

He undoubtedly composed music for many of the psalms, and he commissioned music for temple worship (1 Chron. 25).

With a voice of joy, keep the festival.

Psalm 42:4

These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me for I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, with the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

The writer of this psalm was discouraged because he was exiled to a place far from Jerusalem and could not worship in the temple. During these God-given holidays, the nation was to remember all that God had done for them. Many of these festivals are explained in the chart in Leviticus 23:43.

Depression is one of the most common emotional ailments. One antidote for depression is to meditate on the record of God's goodness to his people.

This will take your mind off the present situation and give hope that it will improve. It will focus your thoughts on God's ability to help you rather than on

your inability to help yourself. When you feel depressed, take advantage of this psalm's antidepressant. Read the Bible's accounts of God's goodness, and meditate on them.

Shout to God with a voice of joy.

Psalm 47:1

O clap your hands, all peoples; Shout to God with the voice of joy.

Psalms 46-48 are hymns of praise, celebrating deliverance from some great foe. Psalm 46 may have been written when the Assyrian army invaded the land and surrounded Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:13-19:37).

Shout joyfully to the God of Jacob.

Psalm 81:1

Sing for joy to God our strength; Shout joyfully to the God of Jacob.

Israel's holidays reminded the nation of God's great miracles. They were times of rejoicing and times to renew one's strength for life's daily struggles. At Christmas, do your thoughts revolve mostly around presents? Is Easter only a warm anticipation of spring and Thanksgiving only a good meal?

Remember the spiritual origins of these special days, and use them as opportunities to worship God for his goodness to you, your family, and your nation.

David instituted music for the temple worship services (1 Chron. 25). Music and worship go hand in hand. Worship should involve the whole person, and music helps lift a person's thoughts and emotions to God. Through music we can reflect upon our needs and shortcomings as well as celebrate God's greatness.

Shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.

Psalm 95:1

O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.

A hardened heart is as useless as a hardened lump of clay or a hardened loaf of bread. Nothing can restore it and make it useful. The psalmist warns against hardening our hearts as Israel did in the desert by continuing to resist God's will (Exodus 17:7).

They were so convinced that God couldn't deliver them that they simply lost their faith in him. When someone's heart becomes hardened, that person is so stubbornly set in his ways that he or she cannot turn to God.

This does not happen all at once; it is the result of a series of choices to disregard God's will. If you resist God long enough, God may toss you aside like hardened bread, useless and worthless.

A joyful shout comes from the tents of the righteous.

Psalm 118:15

The sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of the righteous; the right hand of the LORD does valiantly.

The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart exults, And with my song I shall thank Him.

Commuters place confidence in trains, cars, or buses. Each day we must put our confidence in something or someone. If you are willing to trust a plane or car to get you to your destination, are you willing to trust God to guide you here on earth and to your eternal destination? Do you trust him more than any human being? How futile it is to trust anything or anyone more than God.

Chapter 3



Peace is the presence of tranquility even while in a place of chaos.

It is a sense of wholeness and completeness that is content knowing that God controls the events of the day.

Question: Am I finding the peace that passes all comprehension”

Pray and thank God for what he has done.

Philippians 4:6-7

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Do not be fearful, God leaves his peace with you.

John 14:27

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

The end result of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives is deep and lasting peace. Unlike worldly peace, which is usually defined as the absence of conflict, this peace is confident assurance in any circumstance; with Christ's peace, we have no need to fear the present or the future.

If your life is full of stress, allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with Christ's peace (see Phil. 4:6-7 for more on experiencing God's peace).

Sin, fear, uncertainty, doubt, and numerous other forces are at war within us. The peace of God moves into our hearts and lives to restrain these hostile forces and offer comfort in place of conflict. Jesus says he will give us that peace if we are willing to accept it from him.

God's peace passes all understanding.

Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Imagine never being "anxious about anything"! It seems like an impossibility—we all have worries on the job, in our homes, at school. But Paul's advice is to turn our worries into prayers. Do you want to worry less? Then pray more! Whenever you start to worry, stop and pray.

God's peace is different from the world's peace (see John 14:27). True peace is not found in positive thinking, in absence of conflict, or in good feelings. It comes from knowing that God is in control. Our citizenship in Christ's kingdom is sure, our destiny is set, and we can have victory over sin. Let God's peace guard your heart against anxiety.

Let the peace of God rule in your heart.

Colossians 3:15

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Christians should live in peace. To live in peace does not mean that suddenly all differences in opinion are eliminated, but it does require that loving Christians work together despite their differences. Such love is not a feeling, but a decision to meet others' needs (see 1 Cor. 13).

To live in love leads to peace between individuals and among the members of the body of believers. Do problems in your relationships with other Christians cause open conflicts or mutual silence? Consider what you can do to heal those relationships with love.

The word *rule* comes from the language of athletics: Paul tells us to let Christ's peace be umpire or referee in our hearts. Our hearts are the center of conflict because there our feelings and desires clash—our fears and hopes, distrust and trust, jealousy and love.

How can we deal with these constant conflicts and live as God wants? Paul explains that we must decide between conflicting elements by using the rule of peace—which choice will promote peace in our souls and in our churches? For more on the peace of Christ, see Phil. 4:9.

Pursue peace with everyone.

Hebrews 12:14

Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

The readers were familiar with the ceremonial cleansing ritual that prepared them for worship, and they knew that they had to be holy or clean in order to enter the temple. Sin always blocks our vision of God; so if we want to see God, we must renounce sin and obey him (see Psalm 24:3-4).

Holiness is coupled with living in peace. A right relationship with God leads to right relationships with fellow believers. Although we will not always feel loving toward all other believers, we must pursue peace as we become more Christlike.

Abundant Peace

Jeremiah 33:6

'Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them; and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth.

God assured Jeremiah that he had only to call to God and God would answer (see also Psalm 145:18; Isaiah 58:9; Matthew 7:7). God is ready to answer our prayers, but we must ask for his assistance. Surely God could take care of our needs without our asking.

But when we ask, we are acknowledging that he alone is God and that we cannot accomplish in our own strength all that is his domain to do. When we ask, we must humble ourselves, lay aside our willfulness and worry, and determine to obey him.

God Makes Peace

Psalm 46:9

He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire.

War and destruction are inevitable, but so is God's final victory. At that time, all will stand quietly before the Lord Almighty. How proper, then, for us to be still now, reverently honoring him and his power and majesty. Take time each day to be still and to exalt God.

God of Peace

Judges 6:24

Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and named it The LORD is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

After God called Gideon to be Israel's deliverer, he immediately asked him to tear down the altar of the pagan god, Baal—an act that would test Gideon's faith and commitment.

Canaanite religion was very political, so an attack on a god was often seen as an attack on the local government supporting that god. If caught, Gideon would face serious social problems and probable physical attack. (For more on Baal and Asherah, see the notes on +Judges 2:11-15 and +Judges 3:7.)

Gideon took a great risk by following God's higher law, which specifically forbids idol worship (Exodus 20:1-5). After learning what Gideon had done, the townspeople wanted to kill him. Many of those people were fellow Israelites.

This shows how immoral God's people had become. God said in Deut. 13:6-11 that idolaters must be stoned to death, but these Israelites wanted to stone Gideon for tearing down an idol and worshiping God!

When you begin to accomplish something for God, you may be criticized by the very people who should support you.

Going In Peace

Genesis 26:29

that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD."

With his enemies wanting to make a peace treaty, Isaac was quick to respond, turning the occasion into a celebration. We should be just as receptive to those who want to make peace with us. When God's influence in our lives attracts people—even enemies—we must take the opportunity to reach out to them with God's love.

Men of Peace

Genesis 34:21

"These men are friendly with us; therefore let them live in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters in marriage, and give our daughters to them

Rebekah's servant spirit was clearly demonstrated as she willingly and quickly drew water for Eliezer and his camels. The pots used for carrying water were large and heavy. It took a lot of water to satisfy a thirsty camel—up to 25 gallons per camel after a week's travel.

Seeing Rebekah go to work, Eliezer knew this was a woman with a heart for doing far more than the bare minimum. Do you have a servant spirit? When asked to help or when you see a need, go beyond the minimum.

Chapter 4



Patience is the ability to endure ill treatment from life or at the hands of others without lashing out or paying back.

Question: Am I able to keep a godly perspective in the face of life's irritations?

Let us run with patience the race set before us.

Hebrews 12:1

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

This "great cloud of witnesses" is composed of the people described in Hebrews 11. Their faithfulness is a constant encouragement to us. We do not struggle alone, and we are not the first to struggle with the problems we face. Others have run the race and won, and their witness stirs us to run and win also. What an inspiring heritage we have!

The Christian life involves hard work. It requires us to give up whatever endangers our relationship with God, to run patiently, and to struggle against sin with the power of the Holy Spirit. To live effectively, we must keep our eyes on Jesus. We will stumble if we look away from him to stare at ourselves or at the circumstances surrounding us. We should be running for Christ, not ourselves, and we must always keep him in sight.

When we face hardship and discouragement, it is easy to lose sight of the big picture. But we're not alone; there is help. Many have already made it through life, enduring far more difficult circumstances than we have experienced. Suffering is the training ground for Christian maturity. It develops our patience and makes our final victory sweet.

Bear fruit with perseverance.

Luke 8:15

"But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

"Path" people, like many of the religious leaders, refused to believe God's message. "Rock" people, like many in the crowds who followed Jesus, believed his message but never got around to doing anything about it. "Thorn patch" people, overcome by worries and the lure of materialism, left no room in their lives for God. "Good soil" people, in contrast to all the other groups, followed Jesus no matter what the cost. Which type of soil are you?

In perseverance seek for immortality and eternal life.

Romans 2:7

To those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;

Although God does not usually punish us immediately for sin, his eventual judgment is certain. We don't know exactly when it will happen, but we know that no one will escape that final encounter with the Creator. For more on judgment, see John 12:48 and Rev. 20:11-15.

Contradicting his previous statement that salvation comes by faith alone (Romans 1:16-17). We are not saved by good deeds, but when we commit our lives fully to God, we want to please him and do his will. As such, our good deeds are a grateful *response* to what God has done, not a prerequisite to earning his grace.

In due time you will reap if you do not faint.

Galatians 6:9

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

It is discouraging to continue to do right and receive no word of thanks or see no tangible results. But Paul challenged the Galatians and he challenges us to keep on doing good and to trust God for the results. In due time, we will reap a harvest of blessing.

Rest patiently for the Lord.

Psalm 37:7

Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.

David calls us to take delight in the Lord and to commit everything we have and do (our “way”) to him. But how do we do this? To *delight* in someone means to experience great pleasure and joy in his or her presence. This happens only when we know that person well. Thus, to delight in the Lord, we must know him better. Knowledge of God’s great love for us will indeed give us delight.

To *commit* ourselves to the Lord means entrusting everything—our lives, families, jobs, possessions—to his control and guidance. To commit ourselves to the Lord means to trust in him (Psalm 37:5), believing that he can care for us better than we can ourselves. We should be willing to wait patiently (Psalm 37:7) for him to work out what is best for us.

When waiting patiently, God inclined his ear to me.

Psalm 40:1

I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me and heard my cry.

Waiting for God to help us is not easy, but David received four benefits from waiting: God

(1) lifted him out of his despair,

(2) set his feet on a rock,

(3) gave him a firm place to stand, and

(4) put a new song of praise in his mouth. Often blessings cannot be received unless we go through the trial of waiting.

Wait eagerly for the revelation of our Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:7

So that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

The Corinthian church members had all the spiritual gifts they needed to live the Christian life, to witness for Christ, and to stand against the paganism and immorality of Corinth. But instead of using what God had given them, they were arguing over which gifts were more important. Paul addresses this issue in depth in 1 Cor. 12-14.

Paul guaranteed the Corinthian believers that God would consider them “blameless” when Christ returns (see Ephes. 1:7-10). This guarantee was not because of their great gifts or their shining performance, but because of what Jesus Christ accomplished for them through his death and resurrection.

All who believe in the Lord Jesus will be considered blameless when Jesus Christ returns (see also 1 Thes. 3:13; Hebrews 9:28). If you have faith in Christ, even if it is weak, you *are* and *will be* saved.

Be directed into the steadfastness of Christ.

2 Thessalonians 3:5

May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

Beneath the surface of the routine of daily life, a fierce struggle among invisible spiritual powers is being waged. Our main defense is prayer that God will protect us from the evil one and that he will strengthen us.

The following guidelines can help you prepare for and survive satanic attacks:

- (1) Take the threat of spiritual attack seriously;
- (2) Pray for strength and help from God;
- (3) Study the Bible to recognize Satan's style and tactics;
- (4) Memorize Scripture so it will be a source of help no matter where you are;
- (5) Associate with those who speak the truth; and
- (6) Practice what you are taught by spiritual leaders.

Wait eagerly for your hope.

Romans 8:25

But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

It is natural for children to trust their parents, even though parents sometimes fail to keep their promises. Our heavenly Father, however, never makes promises he won't keep.

Nevertheless, his plan may take more time than we expect. Rather than acting like impatient children as we wait for God's will to unfold, we should place our confidence in God's goodness and wisdom.

In Romans, Paul presents the idea that salvation is past, present, and future. It is past because we *were* saved the moment we believed in Jesus Christ as Savior (Romans 3:21-26; Romans 5:1-11; Romans 6:1-11, 22-23); our new life (eternal life) begins at that moment.

And it is present because we *are being* saved; this is the process of sanctification (see the note on +Romans 6:1-8:39). But at the same time, we have not fully received all the benefits and blessings of salvation that will be ours when Christ's new kingdom is completely established.

That's our future salvation. While we can be confident of our salvation, we still look ahead with hope and trust toward that complete change of body and personality that lies beyond this life, when we will be like Christ (1 John 3:2).

Wait for the hope of righteousness.

Galatians 5:5

For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

We are saved by faith, not by deeds. But love for others and for God is the response of those whom God has forgiven. God's forgiveness is complete, and Jesus said that those who are forgiven much love much (Luke 7:47). Because faith expresses itself through love, you can check your love for others as a way to monitor your faith.

Chapter 5



Kindness is moral goodness that overflows and it is also the absence of malice.

Question: Am I too focused on my own needs, desires, or problems to let the goodness of God overflow to others?

God satisfies your heart.

Acts 14:17

And yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

Responding to the people of Lystra, Paul and Barnabas reminded them that God never leaves himself "without testimony." Rain and crops, for example, are evidence of his goodness. Later Paul wrote that this evidence in nature leaves people without an excuse for unbelief (Romans 1:20).

When in doubt about God, look around and you will see abundant evidence that he is at work in our world.

God exercises justice, righteousness and mercy.

Jeremiah 9:24

but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD.

People tend to admire four qualities in others: human wisdom, power (strength), kindness, and riches. But God puts a higher priority on knowing him personally and living a life that reflects his justice and righteousness. What do you want people to admire most about you?

Love your enemies and your reward will be great.

Luke 6:35

"But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

Make mention of the loving kindness of the Lord.

Isaiah 63:7

I shall make mention of the loving kindnesses of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, According to all that the LORD has granted us, And the great goodness toward the house of Israel, Which He has granted them according to His compassion And according to the abundance of His loving kindnesses.

Edom was a constant enemy of Israel despite its common ancestry in Isaac (Genesis 25:23). Edom rejoiced at any trouble Israel faced. The imagery in this passage is of a watchman on the wall of Jerusalem, seeing Edom approaching and fearing that the Edomite king in his crimson garment is leading an attack. But it turns out to be the Lord, in bloodstained clothes, who has trampled and destroyed Edom. Bozrah is a city in Edom. (For other prophecies against Edom, see Amos 1:11-12; Obadiah 1:10-11; Malachi 1:2-4.)

Be kind to one another.

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

We can grieve the Holy Spirit by the way we live. Paul warns us against unwholesome language, bitterness, improper use of anger, brawling, slander, and bad attitudes toward others. Instead of acting that way, we should be forgiving, just as God has forgiven us. Are you grieving or pleasing God with your attitudes and actions?

Act in love toward your brothers and sisters in Christ, just as God acted in love by sending his Son to die for your sins.

The Holy Spirit within us is a seal or guarantee that we belong to God. For more on this thought, see the note on +Ephes. 1:13-14.

This is Christ's law of forgiveness as taught in the Gospels (Matthew 6:14-15; Matthew 18:35; Mark 11:25). We also see it in the Lord's Prayer—"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." God does not forgive us *because* we forgive others, but solely because of his great mercy.

As we come to understand his mercy, however, we will want to be like him. Having received forgiveness, we will pass it on to others.

Those who are unwilling to forgive have not become one with Christ, who was willing to forgive even those who crucified him (Luke 23:34).

You have love of the brother.

1 Thessalonians 4:9

Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

There is more to Christian living than simply loving other Christians. We must be responsible in all areas of life. Some of the Thessalonian Christians had adopted a life of idleness, depending on others for handouts. Some Greeks looked down on manual labor. So Paul told the Thessalonians to work hard and live a quiet life. You can't be effective in sharing your faith with others if they don't respect you. Whatever you do, do it faithfully and be a positive force in society.

Love your enemies and do good.

Luke 6:35

"But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

God shows loving kindness.

Ephesians 2:7

So that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Because of Christ's resurrection, we know that our bodies will also be raised from the dead (1 Cor. 15:2-23) and that we have been given the power to live as Christians now (Ephes. 1:19). These ideas are combined in Paul's image of sitting with Christ in "the heavenly realms" (see the note on +Ephes. 1:3). Our eternal life with Christ is certain because we are united in his powerful victory.

God has extended loving kindness.

Ezra 9:9

"For we are slaves; yet in our bondage our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.

Building a wall was not only a matter of civic pride or architectural beauty, it was essential for security and defense against robbers and marauders (see Ezra 9:7). God in his kindness had given them new life and protection.

God's loving kindness is everlasting.

Isaiah 54:8

"In an outburst of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you," Says the LORD your Redeemer.

God said that he had abandoned Israel for a brief moment, so the nation was like a young wife rejected by her husband. But God still called Israel his own. The God we serve is holy, and he cannot tolerate sin. When his people blatantly sinned, God in his anger chose to punish them. Sin separates us from God and brings us pain and suffering. But if we confess our sin and repent, then God will forgive us. Have you ever been separated from a loved one and then experienced joy when that person returned? That is like the joy God experiences when you repent and return to him.

Chapter 6



Goodness reflects the character of God. Goodness in you desires to see goodness in others and is not beyond confronting or even.

Question: Does my life reflect the holiness of God, and do I desire to see others experience God at a deep level in their own lives?

All things work together for good to those who love God.

Romans 8:28 - And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose.

God works in “all things”—not just isolated incidents—for our good. This does not mean that all that happens to us is good. Evil is prevalent in our fallen world, but God is able to turn every circumstance around for our long-range good. Note that God is not working to make us happy, but to fulfill his purpose.

Note also that this promise is not for everybody. It can be claimed only by those who love God and are called according to his purpose. Those who are “called” are those the Holy Spirit convinces and enables to receive Christ. Such people have a new perspective, a new mind-set on life.

They trust in God, not life’s treasures; they look for their security in heaven, not on earth; they learn to accept, not resent, pain and persecution because God is with them.

I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Psalms 23:6 - Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

In ancient Near Eastern culture, at a banquet it was customary to anoint a person with fragrant oil as a lotion. Hosts were also expected to protect their guests at all costs. God offers the protection of a host even when enemies surround us. In the final scene of this psalm, we see that believers will dwell with God. God, the perfect shepherd and host, promises to guide and protect us through life to bring us into his house forever.

Great, is the goodness of God.

Psalms 31:19

Oh how great [is] thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee
which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

In saying, “My times are in your hands,” David was expressing his belief that all of life’s circumstances are under God’s control. Knowing that God loves and cares for us enables us to keep steady in our faith regardless of our circumstances. It keeps us from sinning foolishly by taking matters into our own hands or resenting God’s timetable.

Abhor that which is evil.

Romans 12:9 - Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

Most of us have learned how to pretend to love others—how to speak kindly, avoid hurting their feelings, and appear to take an interest in them. We may even be skilled in pretending to feel moved with compassion when we hear of others’ needs, or to become indignant when we learn of injustice. But God calls us to real and sincere love that goes far beyond pretense and politeness. Sincere love requires

concentration and effort. It means helping others become better people. It demands our time, money, and personal involvement. No individual has the capacity to express love to a whole community, but the body of Christ in your town does. Look for people who need your love, and look for ways you and your fellow believers can love your community for Christ.

The goodness of the Lord is in the land of the living.

Psalms 27:13 - [I had fainted], unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

The “land of the living” simply means “this life.” David was obviously going through a trial, but he was confident that in this present life God would see him through it.

David knew from experience what it meant to wait for the Lord. He had been anointed king at age 16, but didn’t become king until he was 30. During the interim, he was chased through the desert by jealous King Saul. David had to wait on God for the fulfillment of his promise to reign. Later, after becoming king, he was chased by his rebellious son, Absalom.

Waiting for God is not easy. Often it seems that he isn’t answering our prayers or doesn’t understand the urgency of our situation. That kind of thinking implies that God is not in control or is not fair. But God is worth waiting for. Lamentations 3:24-26 calls us to hope in and wait for the Lord because often God uses waiting to refresh, renew, and teach us. Make good use of your waiting times by discovering what God may be trying to teach you in them.

Good conversation is to come with meekness of wisdom.

James 3:13 - Who [is] a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

Have you ever known anyone who claimed to be wise but who acted foolishly? True wisdom can be measured by the depth of a person's character. Just as you can identify a tree by the type of fruit it produces, you can evaluate your wisdom by the way you act. Foolishness leads to disorder, but wisdom leads to peace and goodness. Are you tempted to escalate the conflict, pass on the gossip, or fan the fire of discord? Careful, winsome speech and wise, loving words are the seeds of peace. God loves peacemakers (Matthew 5:9).

Every good and perfect gift comes from above.

James 1:17 - Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

The Bible often compares goodness with light and evil with darkness. For other passages where God is pictured as light, see Psalm 27:1, Isaiah 60:19-22, John 1:1-14.

Let us do good to all men.

Galatians 6:10 - As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men. Especially do good unto them who are of the household of faith.

It is discouraging to continue to do right and receive no word of thanks or see no tangible results. But Paul challenged the Galatians and he challenges us to keep on doing good and to trust God for the results. In due time, we will reap a harvest of blessing.

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Psalms 34:8 - O taste and see that the LORD [is] good: blessed [is] the man [that] trusteth in him.

“Taste and see” does not mean, “Check out God’s credentials.” Instead it is a warm invitation: “Try this; I know you’ll like it.” When we take that first step of obedience in following God, we cannot help discovering that he is good and kind. When we begin the Christian life, our knowledge of God is partial and incomplete. As we trust him daily, we experience how good he is.

Chapter 7



A faithful person is someone others can look to as an example, and someone who is truly devoted to others and to Christ. Our natural self always wants to be in charge, but Spirit-controlled faithfulness is evident in the life of a person who seeks good for others and glory for God.

Question: Is my life characterized by faith in Christ and faithfulness to those around me?

God has called you into fellowship with his son.

1 Corinthians 1:9

God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul guaranteed the Corinthian believers that God would consider them “blameless” when Christ returns (see Ephes. 1:7-10). This guarantee was not because of their great gifts or their shining performance, but because of what Jesus Christ accomplished for them through his death and resurrection.

All who believe in the Lord Jesus will be considered blameless when Jesus Christ returns (see also 1 Thes. 3:13; Hebrews 9:28). If you have faith in Christ, even if it is weak, you *are* and *will be* saved.

God will bring his faithfulness to pass.

1 Thessalonians 5:24

Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

As Christians, we cannot avoid every kind of evil because we live in a sinful world. We can, however, make sure that we don't give evil a foothold by avoiding tempting situations and concentrating on obeying God.

The spirit, soul, and body refer not so much to the distinct parts of a person as to the entire being of a person. This expression is Paul's way of saying that God must be involved in *every* aspect of our lives.

It is wrong to think that we can separate our spiritual lives from everything else, obeying God only in some ethereal sense or living for him only one day each week. Christ must control *all* of us, not just a "religious" part.

Faithfulness, In Human Relationships

Hosea 12:6

Therefore, return to your God, Observe kindness and justice, and wait for your God continually.

The two principles that Hosea called his nation to live by, love and justice, are at the very foundation of God's character. They are essential to his followers, but they are not easy to keep in balance. Some people are loving to the point that they excuse wrongdoing. Others are just to the extent that they forget love.

Love without justice, because it is not aiming at a higher standard, leaves people in their sins. Justice without love, because it has no heart, drives people away from God. To specialize in one at the expense of the other is to distort our witness. Today's church, just like Hosea's nation, must live by both principles.

Keep God's statutes according to the law.

1 Kings 2:3-4

"Keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn,

David stressed to Solomon the need to make God and his laws the center of personal life and government in order to preserve the kingdom, as God had promised to do (2 Samuel 7). This promise from God had two parts. One part was conditional and depended upon the kings' actions. The other part was unconditional.

God's conditional promise was that David and his descendants would remain in office as kings *only* when they honored and obeyed him. When David's descendants failed to do this, they lost the throne (2 Kings 25). God's unconditional promise was that David's line would go on forever. This was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ, a descendant of David who was also the eternal Son of God (Romans 1:3-4). David, whose life exemplified obedience, gave well-seasoned advice to his son, the next king. It would be up to Solomon to follow it.

God cannot deny himself.

2 Timothy 2:13

If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

Jesus is faithful. He will stay by our side even when we have endured so much that we seem to have no faith left. We may be faithless at times, but Jesus is faithful to his promise to be with us "to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Refusing Christ's help will break our communication with God, but he will never turn his back on us even though we may turn our backs on him.

Hold fast, you confession of hope.

Hebrews 10:23

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

We have significant privileges associated with our new life in Christ: (1) we have personal access to God through Christ and can draw near to him without an elaborate system (Hebrews 10:22); (2) we may grow in faith, overcome doubts and questions, and deepen our relationship with God (Hebrews 10:23); (3) we may enjoy encouragement from one another (Hebrews 10:24); (4) we may worship together (Hebrews 10:25).

God's lovingkindness is everlasting.

Psalms 100:5

For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations.

God alone is worthy of being worshiped. What is your attitude toward worship? Do you willingly and joyfully come into God's presence, or are you just going through the motions, reluctantly going to church? This psalm tells us to remember God's goodness and dependability, and then to worship with thanksgiving and praise!

All of God's work is done in faithfulness.

Psalms 33:4

For the word of the LORD is upright, and all His work is done in faithfulness.

All God's words are right and true—they can be trusted. The Bible is reliable because, unlike people, God does not lie, forget, change his words, or leave his promises unfulfilled. We can trust the Bible because it contains the words of a holy, trustworthy, and unchangeable God.

A steward must be found trustworthy.

1 Corinthians 4:2

In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.

Paul urged the Corinthians to think of him, Peter (Cephas), and Apollos not as leaders of factions, but as servants of Christ entrusted with the secret things of God (see the note on +1 Cor. 2:7). A servant does what his master tells him to do.

We must do what God tells us to do in the Bible and through his Holy Spirit. Each day God presents us with needs and opportunities that challenge us to do what we know is right.

God's faithfulness continues throughout all generations.

Psalm 119:90

Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations; you established the earth, and it stands.

God's Word makes us wise—wiser than our enemies and wiser than any teachers who ignore it. True wisdom goes beyond amassing knowledge; it is *applying* knowledge in a life-changing way. Intelligent or experienced people are not necessarily wise. Wisdom comes from allowing what God teaches to guide us.

Chapter 8



Meekness is not weakness. Gentleness is not without power, it just chooses to defer to others. It forgives others, corrects with kindness, and lives in tranquility.

Question: Am I allowing the grace of God to flow through me to others?

There is no law against gentleness and self-control.

Galatians 5:23

Gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Because the God who sent the law also sent the Spirit, the by-products of the Spirit-filled life are in perfect harmony with the intent of God's law. A person who exhibits the fruit of the Spirit fulfills the law far better than a person who observes the rituals but has little love in his or her heart.

Show tolerance in one another in love.

Ephesians 4:2

With all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,

God has chosen us to be Christ's representatives on earth. In light of this truth, Paul challenges us to live lives worthy of the calling we have received—the awesome privilege of being called Christ's very own. This includes being humble, gentle, patient, understanding, and peaceful. People are watching your life. Can they see Christ in you? How well are you doing as his representative?

The Lord is near.

Philippians 4:5

Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.

Ultimate joy comes from Christ dwelling within us. Christ is near, and at his second coming we will fully realize this ultimate joy. He who lives within us will fulfill his final purposes for us.

We are to be gentle (reasonable, fair minded, and charitable) to those outside the church, and not just to fellow believers. This means we are not to seek revenge against those who treat us unfairly, nor are we to be overly vocal about our personal rights.

Be baptized for the forgiveness of sins.

Acts 2:38

Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

If you want to follow Christ, you must "repent and be baptized." To repent means to *turn from* sin, changing the direction of your life from selfishness and rebellion against God's laws. At the same time, you must *turn to* Christ, depending on him for forgiveness, mercy, guidance, and purpose.

We cannot save ourselves—only God can save us. Baptism identifies us with Christ and with the community of believers. It is a condition of discipleship and a sign of faith.

Follow God with gentleness and meekness.

2 Corinthians 10:1

Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ--I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!

Paul's opponents questioned his authority. From 2 Cor. 7:8-16 we know that the majority of Corinthian believers sided with Paul. However, a minority continued to slander him, saying that he was bold in his letters but had no authority in person. 2 Cor. 10-13 are Paul's response to this charge.

Wisdom from above is full of good fruits.

James 3:17

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

Have you ever known anyone who claimed to be wise but who acted foolishly? True wisdom can be measured by the depth of a person's character. Just as you can identify a tree by the type of fruit it produces, you can evaluate your wisdom by the way you act.

Foolishness leads to disorder, but wisdom leads to peace and goodness. Are you tempted to escalate the conflict, pass on the gossip, or fan the fire of discord? Careful, winsome speech and wise, loving words are the seeds of peace. God loves peacemakers (Matthew 5:9).

Do not meddle with strife.

Proverbs 26:17

Like one who takes a dog by the ears is he who passes by and meddles with strife not belonging to him.

. Many times both arguers will turn on the person who interferes. It is best simply to keep out of arguments that are none of your business. If you must become involved, try to wait until the arguers have stopped fighting and cooled off a bit. Then maybe you can help them mend their differences and their relationship.

Accept one another as Christ has accepted you.

Romans 15:7

Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

To accept Jesus' lordship in all areas of life means to share his values and his perspective. Just as we take Jesus' view on the authority of Scripture, the nature of heaven, and the resurrection, we are to have his attitude of love toward other Christians as well (have a "spirit of unity").

As we grow in faith and come to know Jesus better, we will become more capable of maintaining this attitude of loving unity throughout each day. Christ's attitude is explained in more detail in Phil. 2.

God will gently lead his sheep.

Isaiah 40:11

Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

God is often pictured as a shepherd, gently caring for and guiding his flock. He is powerful (Isaiah 40:10), yet careful and gentle. He is called a shepherd (Psalm 23); the good shepherd (John 10:11, 14); the great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20); and the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). Note that the shepherd is caring for the most defenseless members of his society: children and those caring for them. This reinforces the prophetic theme that the truly powerful nation is not the one with a strong military, but rather the one that relies on God's caring strength.

Chapter 9



. Self-control is literally releasing our grip on the fleshly desires, choosing instead to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. It is power focused in the right place.

Question: Are my fleshly desires controlling my life, or am I allowing the Spirit to direct me to the things that please God and serve others?

A wise man does not lose his temper.

Proverbs 29:11

A fool always loses his temper, but a wise man holds it back.

“The LORD gives sight to the eyes of both” means that everyone depends on God for sight. Both the oppressor and the poor have the gift of sight from the same God. God sees and judges both, and his judgment falls on those whose greed or power drives them to oppress the poor.

Receive instruction of wisdom, justice, and equity.

Proverbs 1:1-5

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;

To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. [5] A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

The book of Proverbs is to everyday life. Proverbs gives practical suggestions for effective living. This book is not just a collection of homey sayings; it contains deep spiritual insights drawn from experience.

A *proverb* is a short, wise, easy-to-learn saying that calls a person to action. It doesn't argue about basic spiritual and moral beliefs; it assumes we already hold them. The book of Proverbs focuses on God—his character, works, and blessings—and it tells how we can live in close relationship to him.

Solomon, the third king of Israel, son of the great King David, reigned during Israel's golden age. When God said he would give him whatever he wanted, he asked for a discerning heart (1 Kings 3:5-14).

God was pleased with this request, and he not only made Solomon wise but also gave him great riches and power and an era of peace. Solomon built the glorious temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6) and wrote most of the book of Proverbs. For more about Solomon, see his Profile.

There is no law against the fruits of the spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The fruit of the Spirit is the spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit in us. The Spirit produces these character traits that are found in the nature of Christ. They are the by-products of Christ's control—we can't obtain them by trying to get them without his help.

If we want the fruit of the Spirit to grow in us, we must join our lives to his (see John 15:4-5). We must know him, love him, remember him, and imitate him. As a

result, we will fulfill the intended purpose of the law—to love God and our neighbors. Which of these qualities do you want the Spirit to produce in you?

Because the God who sent the law also sent the Spirit, the by-products of the Spirit-filled life are in perfect harmony with the intent of God's law. A person who exhibits the fruit of the Spirit fulfills the law far better than a person who observes the rituals but has little love in his or her heart.

Deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.

Titus 2:11-12

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,

The power to live as a Christian comes from the Holy Spirit. Because Christ died and rescued us from sin, we are free from sin's control. God gives us the power and understanding to live according to his will and to do good. Then we will look forward to Christ's wonderful return with eager expectation and hope.

It is not enough to renounce sin and evil desires; we must also live actively for God. To fight against lust we must say no to temptation, but we must also say yes to active service for Christ.

An overseer must be above reproach.

1 Timothy 3:2

An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

When Paul says that each overseer should have only one wife, he is prohibiting both polygamy and promiscuity. This does not prohibit an unmarried person from becoming an elder or a widowed elder from remarrying.

Be loving and self-controlled.

Titus 1:8

But hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled.

Paul had given Timothy a similar set of instructions for the church in Ephesus (see 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 1 Tim. 5:22). Notice that most of the qualifications involve character, not knowledge or skill.

A person's life-style and relationships provide a window into his or her character. Consider these qualifications as you evaluate a person for a position of leadership in your church. It is important to have leaders who can effectively preach God's Word, but it is even more important to have those who can live out God's Word and be examples for others to follow.

Older men should persevere.

Titus 2:2

Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance.

Self-control was an important aspect in early Christianity. The Christian community was made up of people from differing backgrounds and viewpoints, making conflict inevitable. Christians existed in a pagan and often hostile world. To stay above reproach, men and women needed wisdom and discernment to be discreet, and to master their wills, tongues, and passions so that Christ would not be dishonored. How's your self-control?

Women who were new Christians were to learn how to have harmony in the home by watching older women who had been Christians for some time. We have the same need today. Younger wives and mothers should learn to live in a Christian manner—loving their husbands and caring for their children—through observing exemplary women of God.

If you are of an age or position where people look up to you, make sure that your example is motivating younger believers to live in a way that honors God.

Do not run without an aim.

1 Corinthians 9:26-27

Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Winning a race requires purpose and discipline. Paul uses this illustration to explain that the Christian life takes hard work, self-denial, and grueling preparation. As Christians, we are running toward our heavenly reward.

The essential disciplines of prayer, Bible study, and worship equip us to run with vigor and stamina. Don't merely observe from the grandstand; don't just turn out to jog a couple of laps each morning. Train diligently—your spiritual progress depends upon it.

Possess your vessel in sanctification and honour.

1 Thes. 4:3-7

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto ho

Being *sanctified* or made holy is the process of living the Christian life. The Holy Spirit works in us, conforming us into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).

Prepare your minds for action.

1 Peter 1:13

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, and fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The imminent return of Christ should motivate us to live for him. This means being mentally alert (“prepare your minds for action”), disciplined (“self-controlled”), and focused (“set your hope fully”). Are you ready to meet Christ?

Chapter 10



When we follow the Spirit's lead instead of being led by our self-focused desires, He produces the fruit.

Question: How then do we walk in the Spirit?

Those who walk in the spirit do not carry out the will of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16-17

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

The fruits of the Spirit, or of the renewed nature, which we are to do, are named. And as the apostle had chiefly named works of the flesh, not only hurtful to men themselves, but tending to make them so to one another, so here he chiefly notices the fruits of the Spirit, which tend to make Christians agreeable one to another, as well as to make them happy.

The fruits of the Spirit plainly show, that such are led by the Spirit.

Walk as children of light.

Ephesians 5:8

For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light

As children of light, your actions should reflect your faith. You should live above reproach morally so that you will reflect God's goodness to others. Jesus stressed this truth in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:15-16).

We walk by faith.

2 Corinthians 5:7

For we walk by faith, not by sight—

Paul was not afraid to die, because he was confident of spending eternity with Christ. Of course, facing the unknown may cause us anxiety, and leaving loved ones hurts deeply, but if we believe in Jesus Christ, we can share Paul's hope and confidence of eternal life with Christ.

Those in the Spirit do not carry out the desires of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

If your desire is to have the qualities listed in Galatians 5:22-23, then you know that the Holy Spirit is leading you. At the same time, be careful not to confuse your subjective feelings with the Spirit's leading.

Being led by the Holy Spirit involves the desire to hear, the readiness to obey God's Word, and the sensitivity to discern between your feelings and his promptings. Live each day controlled and guided by the Holy Spirit. Then the words of Christ will be in your mind, the love of Christ will be behind your actions, and the power of Christ will help you control your selfish desires.

Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh.

Galatians 5:22-24

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

In order to accept Christ as Savior, we need to turn from our sins and willingly nail our sinful nature to the cross. This doesn't mean, however, that we will never see traces of its evil desires again.

As Christians we still have the capacity to sin, but we have been set free from sin's power over us and no longer have to give in to it. We must daily commit our sinful tendencies to God's control, daily crucify them, and moment by moment draw on the Spirit's power to overcome them (see Galatians 2:20; Galatians 6:14).

Walk in love, even as Christ walked in love.

Ephesians 5:2

And walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

Just as children imitate their parents, we should imitate Christ. His great love for us led him to sacrifice himself so that we might live. Our love for others should be of the same kind—a love that goes beyond affection to self-sacrificing service.

God's word is a light to my path.

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

To walk safely in the woods at night we need a light so we don't trip over tree roots or fall into holes. In this life, we walk through a dark forest of evil. But the Bible can be our light to show us the way ahead so we won't stumble as we walk. It reveals the entangling roots of false values and philosophies. Study the Bible so you will be able to see your way clear enough to stay on the right path.

Walk in the same manner as Christ walked.

1 John 2:6

The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

To “walk as Jesus did” or living as Christ did doesn't mean choosing 12 disciples, performing great miracles, and being crucified. We cannot merely copy Christ's life—much of what Jesus did had to do with his identity as God's Son, the fulfillment of his special role in dying for sin, and the cultural context of the first-century Roman world. To walk today as Christ did we must obey his teachings and follow his example of complete obedience to God and loving service to people.

Walk wisely, making the most of your time.

Ephesians 5:15-16

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

By saying, “the days are evil,” Paul was communicating his sense of urgency because of evil's pervasiveness. We need the same sense of urgency because our days are also difficult. We must keep our standards high, act wisely, and do good whenever we can.

Live and walk by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Everyone needs a certain amount of approval from others. But those who go out of their way to secure honors or to win popularity with a lot of people become conceited and show they are not following the Holy Spirit's leading. Those who look to God for approval won't need to envy others. Because we are God's sons and daughters, we have his Holy Spirit as the loving guarantee of his approval.

Please the Lord in all respects, bearing fruit.

Colossians 1:10-11

so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously

Epaphras had founded the church at Colosse while Paul was living in Ephesus (Acts 19:10). Epaphras may have been converted in Ephesus, and then he returned to Colosse, his hometown. For some reason, he visited Rome and, while there, told Paul about the problem with the Colossian heresy. This prompted Paul to write this letter. Epaphras is also mentioned in Philemon 1:23 (the Colossian church met in Philemon's house).

Live the standard to which you have attained.

Philippians 3:16-18

However, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,

Sometimes trying to live a perfect Christian life can be so difficult that it leaves us drained and discouraged. We may feel so far from perfect that we can never please God with our lives. Paul used *perfect* (Phil. 3:12) to mean mature or complete, not flawless in every detail. Those who are mature should press on in the Holy Spirit's power, knowing that Christ will reveal and fill in any discrepancy between what we are and what we should be. Christ's provision is no excuse for lagging devotion, but it provides relief and assurance for those who feel driven.

Christian maturity involves acting on the guidance that you have already received. We can always make excuses that we still have so much to learn. The instruction for us is to live up to what we already know and live out what we have already learned. We do not have to be sidetracked by an unending search for truth.

Abide in the vine and bear fruit.

John 15:4

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me.

Jesus makes a distinction between two kinds of pruning:

- (1) Separating and
- (2) Cutting back branches.

Fruitful branches are cut back to promote growth. In other words, God must sometimes discipline us to strengthen our character and faith. But branches that don't bear fruit are cut off at the trunk because not only are they worthless, but they often infect the rest of the tree. People who won't bear fruit for God or who try to block the efforts of God's followers will be cut off from his life-giving power.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House2007. Print

