

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Lesson Guide
March 29, 2015
“Fruit of the Spirit”

Memory Verse:

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **gentleness** and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)*

READ THIS FIRST!!!

This week’s lesson is a little different. The Learner’s guide is a list of the 9 Fruits of the Spirit and some personal questions concerning each one. It is labeled “Spiritual Checkup”. Be sure to spend some time for conversation from the group on each one of those questions. The article below is from FamilyLife.com. It offers a brief description of each Fruit of the Spirit and then the self-diagnostic question for discussion. **The questions are “YES or NO” questions, so be prepared to ask what can we do, specifically to be more “fruitful” in each particular area.**

There is a second article from Discipleshiptools.org. It is more in depth and gives several verses for reference to support its discussion of each topic. This is provided as a reference and supplement for any teacher/student wanting to know more. **DO NOT feel like you have to read or discuss every bit of the reference article. It is mainly to help you begin and fuel the conversation with the class over the provided questions.** The web addresses for the questions and the article are on the last page.

Remember: We want to teach in a way that combines scriptural education, fellowship and aiding the learners in self-evaluation so that with the Holy Spirit’s guidance it will lead to life-changing results!

10 Ideas: Reflecting the Fruit of the Spirit

How long since you’ve had a checkup to assess your spiritual health?

By Scott Williams

Not long ago, a seasoned marathoner had just crossed the finish line with an impressive time when he suffered a heart attack and died. From the outside, he looked to be the picture of health, but a fatal condition was hiding on the inside.

Every one of us needs an occasional visit to the doctor for a checkup to make sure everything is working all right and that we don’t have an unknown serious internal condition.

The same is true with our spiritual lives. As creatures of habit, we tend to go through life on autopilot. We often miss clues that indicate that our spirit is not enjoying the good health that God created it for.

In the same way that the doctor puts us through a battery of tests to diagnose potential physical problems, God has given us a process of evaluating spiritual problems in our lives:

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

Each of these is a characteristic of the Holy Spirit’s active presence in our daily activities. Let’s look at each one and ask some diagnostic questions to make sure we’re healthy.

1. **Love** - This word for love doesn't refer to warm feelings but to a deliberate attitude of good will and devotion to others. **Love gives freely without looking at whether the other person deserves it, and it gives without expecting** anything back.

Question: Am I motivated to do for others as Christ has done for me, or am I giving in order to receive something in return?

2. **Joy** - Unlike happiness, joy is gladness that is completely independent of the good or bad things that happen in the course of the day. In fact, joy denotes a supernatural gladness given by God's Spirit that actually seems to show up best during hard times. This is a product of fixing your focus on God's purposes for the events in your life rather than on the circumstances.

Question: Am I experiencing a joy of life on a regular basis, or is my happiness dependent on things going smoothly in my day?

3. **Peace** - It's not the absence of turmoil, but 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: Do I find myself frazzled by the crashing waves of turmoil in my life, or am I experiencing "the peace that passes all comprehension" (Philippians 4:6-7)?

4. **Patience** - Other words that describe this fruit are lenience, long-suffering, forbearance, perseverance, and steadfastness. It is the ability to endure ill treatment from life or at the hands of others without lashing out or paying back.

Question: Am I easily set off when things go wrong or people irritate me, or am I able to keep a godly perspective in the face of life's irritations?

5. **Kindness** - When kindness is at work in a person's life, he or she looks for ways to adapt to meet the needs of others. It is moral goodness that overflows. It's also the absence of malice.

Question: Is it my goal to serve others with kindness, or am I too focused on my own needs, desires or problems to let the goodness of God overflow to others?

6. **Goodness** - While kindness is the soft side of good, goodness reflects the character of God. Goodness in you desires to see goodness in others and is not beyond confronting or even rebuking (as Jesus did with the moneychangers in the temple) for that to happen.

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?

7. **Faithfulness** - A faithful person is one with real integrity. He or she 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: Are there areas of hypocrisy and indifference toward others in my life, or is my life characterized by faith in Christ and faithfulness to those around me?

8. **Gentleness** - 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: Do I come across to others as brash and headstrong, or am I allowing the grace of God to flow through me to others?

9. **Self-control** - Our fleshly desires, Scripture tells us, are continually at odds with God's Spirit and always want to be in charge. 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?

10. **Walk by the Spirit** - While not a fruit of the Spirit, the final item on the checkup produces all nine qualities listed above. When we follow the Spirit's lead instead of being led by our self-focused desires, He produces the fruit.

But even when we don't walk by the Spirit, He is the very one who convicts us that things are not in proper order in our lives.

God promises that if we are willing to admit that we have been walking our own way and ask for His forgiveness and cleansing, He will empower us through His Spirit to live above ourselves and live the abundant life for which He has created us.

Question: Am I actively depending on the Holy Spirit to guide me in God's ways so I don't get wrapped up in myself? If not, am I willing to confess to God that His ways are better than mine, and that I need the Spirit's guidance to live above the fray?

FURTHER REFERENCE

Fruit of the Spirit

By Dr. Richard J. Krejcir

Introduction to the *Fruit of the Spirit*

Romans 5:1-5; 12:1-21; 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40; Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 4:1-6:20; 2 Peter 1:3-9

What does the work and empowerment of the Spirit mean to you?

What is the Fruit of the Spirit?

The Fruit of the Spirit is God's love and work in us, the love of Christ flowing in through His Holy Spirit in and out of us! All because we have a personal relationship with Christ, we have God's living presence in us, living in us. The result is we have the ability to reflect His Fruit and character. In addition, this is a moral obligation on our part to live out our New Life in Christ effectively. This then becomes our visible evidence of our relationship and growth in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior that is contagious and affects others. We display Christ by our manner, demeanor, and temperament. Thus, the Fruit we make becomes the influence and the display case of His transforming power. We do not do this alone; He gives us the Holy Spirit, God's active love and work within and through us so we bear and convey His attributes of Fruit and character. This means we "cultivate," *add to* as in *supplement* His Fruit, God's empowering love for us, which we are given and then we are to continue to build

up by our faith development so we are able to pass this on to others (Isa. 27:6; Hos. 10:1; 14:8; Matt. 3:8; Rom. 6:22; Eph. 5:9; Phil. 1:11).

This Fruit cultivation and production by our walk in Him creates and sets the tone for our behaviors and conduct with one another. This shows off our Lord; as we know Him, we make Him known just by our attitude. This is a cooperative endeavor that happens by our growing and close intimate relationship with Christ. As we grow by faith, which is our devotion, trust, obedience and conviction in Him, we make more and better Fruit. All this by what we add to, and what He then multiplies. Just like adding yeast to dough makes it grow, but in our case, it is not meager air, it is The Holy Spirit at work in us. This synergy of our faith in Christ is to facilitate our active pursuit of Love as a spiritual Fruit that is built from our wondrous and incredible collaboration that we have with God to produce real, godly commitment, conviction, and the demonstration of our obedience. This is what helps form our character and mature, effectual Christian life. It gives us the fiber of our moral center that stretches throughout our being, embracing and holding our relationships and opportunities together when it is sealed as a choice and commitment, and not just a feeling. The Fruit of the Spirit will synergistically combine with the other godly characteristics of our Lord to promote our ability to relate and grow in our personal faith. In so doing, we grow in our relationships, to be better to and for Him as well as others and ourselves. This is the essential essence that builds healthy families, marriages, and relationships in general, as well as healthy churches—all because we are modeling Christ! We become His display case (John 1:1,14; 14:23; Gal. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 4:8; 14-15).

The Fruit of the Spirit is described as a fruit because it is made up of more than one substance. Just like any fruit from a tree, such as an apple or an orange, it has juice, pulp, peel, core, segments, and seeds, all held together by a skin or rind, and attached to the tree by a stem where its nutrients flow in. So it is with our relationship in Christ. If you just eat of the pulp or juice and throw out the rest, how can you grow more without the seeds? If you take the fruit off the vine and do not use it, no nutrients will flow in and thus it will wither and rot. If the vine is not cared for, the tree will die. So it is with the Fruit of the Spirit, and so it is with our relationship with Christ as well as our relationships with others for the faith. God makes it and it requires the efforts of our fostering this spiritual development from our growth of faith that necessitates our tending. It is more than just one substance; all of its substances combined are greater than the sum of its parts creating "synergy" of faith. Thus, the Fruit of the Spirit is the physical, empowering essence from our healthy, growing relationship with the Holy Spirit that gives us the active application of a transformed life that showcases who Christ is as well as inspires and affects others. In order to become more mature believers and build healthier churches, we must learn and understand these essential attributes (Hab. 2:4; John 15; Rom. 12; Phil. 2:13).

How many Fruit(s) of the Spirit are there?

Is it "Fruit" of the Spirit or is it "Fruits" of the Spirit? There are nine or more fruits, so it must be a plural? Yes and no; in the Greek language, it is referred to as "singular," meaning one Fruit. In classic Reformed and Evangelical theology, it is listed as both (*Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* the definitive work and many other references too), but the singular is the more correct way to refer to it. Then there is the number; is it nine, twelve, or more? Catholics add modesty, continence, and chastity, which they get from the Latin *Vulgate* translation. Then 2 Peter 1 gives a slightly different listing. Basically, most biblical theologians look to the Galatians nine and the others, more than seventy total, are referred to as virtues or "characters." Let us first take a quick look at the main nine Fruit(s) of the Spirit that flow from God's work and love working in us. These all flow from love and cooperate as one in one another (Galatians 5:22-23):

The Galatian Fruits:

- **Love** will enable us to appreciate our brothers and sisters in the Lord and, of course, our family and others around us. Love is taking the initiative to build up and meet the needs of others, without expecting anything

in return. We must allow *love* to be the foundation of our relationships-the love of our Lord that He gives us. Love manifests patience and kindness and it is not greedy or jealous; it is not prideful nor brags of one's accomplishments. It is not rude or self-seeking, and it allows one not to be easily angered. By this, we do not keep record of others wrongs or enjoy it when bad things happen to others; rather, we rejoice with others to build them up. Love always looks after others, shows trust, hope, and always carries on. Love encapsulates the purpose and role of Fruit, and thus, our furthestmost goal, as followers of Christ, is to do all things in love (John 13:1; 15:13; 1 Corinthians 13:3-8; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 John 4:16).

- **Joy** is our focus on Christ as Lord; this allows us to enjoy our relationship with Him, His creation, and others, regardless of our circumstances, with an expression of delight and real, authentic happiness that comes from and with harmony with God and others. *Joy* in James refers to declaring our situation as happy and fulfilling, even when it is not. It is to change our mindset and focus. It is realizing the sovereignty of God and that He is in control, even when life seems to be turned upside down and inside out! Joy helps us understand God's perspective and gives us the confidence and patience to endure anything. Joy is not happiness, because we may not be content and pleased with it; rather, joy is hope. It is our real hope. It is not a meager wish; rather, it is the unshakable confidence of our future in Christ. Our pleasure comes from knowing He is in charge and caring for us (Psalm 32:7-9; 34:1-8; Proverbs 15:13; John 15:11; 17:13; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Thess. 5:18; 1 Peter 4:13- 19; Hebrews 10:34; 12:2; James 1:1-4)!
- **Peace** is surrendering and yielding ourselves to the Lord to be in His control, for He is our ultimate peace! In so doing, tranquility will be our tone, control, and our composure. This will be fueled from our harmonious relationship with God-handing over control of our hearts, will, and minds to Him. We are willing to make peace with others because we have found peace with God. Thus, we can live at peace with our neighbors, proclaiming serenity and rekindling it when it goes down or is lost. Peace is unity, which is more important than just resolving trivial disagreements. Our focus must be on edifying and encouraging-such things, unfortunately, rare in the church today! We will either lift people up or bring them down, something we need to know so as to pursue peace and harmony and not let the childish and petty things of life divide us. Our focus must be on keeping our own accounts straight and not worrying or interfering with others. This helps make us peacemakers. Once we make real peace with God, we will be able to make and maintain peace with others. When we are at peace with God, we need to be at peace with ourselves emotionally, and others relationally (Isaiah. 26:3; Matthew 5:9; Luke 19:42; John 14:27; 16:33; Romans 5:1; 12:18; Galatians 5:22-23; Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:7).
- **Patience**, in some translations is *called Longsuffering*; this calls for showing tolerance and fortitude toward others, even accepting difficult situations with them-and God-without making demands or conditions. Patience is our "staying power." It is like perseverance and the endurance to not give up; it is about actively overcoming our situation-not just sitting, accepting, and doing nothing! It allows us to endure a less than desirable situation, to make us better, more useful, and even optimistic and prudent. Hence, its other name, *longsuffering*. It allows us to put up with others who "get on our nerves" without losing other characteristics of grace (Hosea 2:19-23; Psalm 33:20; Matthew 27:14; Romans 5:3; 12:12; Galatians 5:1; 5:22-23; Colossians 1:11; James 1:3-4,12; 5:10-11).
- **Kindness** is the medium through which Christ's love becomes real, tangible, and knowable through us. It is the application of sincere love that manifests itself in practicing benevolence and a loving attitude towards others. Kindness is the essence that shows the world we are Christians, like the fragrance coming from a beautiful flower. It is being convicted with God's Word, and then modeling it to others. Being charitable is an aspect of good positive relationships of others, and a "MUST" part of the Christian experience and duty! Kindness is the subject to the object of who we are in Christ. This is something we replicate as we are kind, and also respond in kindness to others, our response to one another fuels the other's response, and so forth.

In this way, we will be escalating love and kindness instead of repression and dysfunction (Romans 2:1-4; 12:9-21; 2 Corinthians 6:6-7; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-14; 1 John 3:16-23)!

- **Goodness** is the engagement of love that shows the application of Christ, His righteousness, and Truth. This models it to others in the action of love, making Christ and us attractive and inviting. This is God at work in our faith, so we are synergized with His power and then engage it to others. This is the fruit that makes people liked by and even lovable to others. This displays integrity, honesty, and compassion to others, and allows us to do the right thing. It is doing the right thing, even when it does not feel like we should, as Joseph did. He was betrayed and sold as a slave, yet, he chose to make his situation into something good, and to help and treat others better than he needed to. Why are we to be good? Because God is good to us (Psalm 86:5; 145:4-13)! Goodness is the model for people to repent and accept Christ (Amos 5:15; Proverbs 25:22; Matthew 19:16; Romans 12:17; Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 5:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 1 Peter 3:11; 2 Peter 1:3-8).
- **Faithfulness** is the application of our faith in action; because we are saved by Christ, He dwells in our hearts. Thus, we are infused with dependability because as we praise His name, it hits home in our being. It is not faith itself; rather, it is the fruit and character of faith. It is the "gluing" fruit that will preserve our faith and the other characters of the Spirit, and identify God's will, so we can be dependable and trusting to God and others. Faith is the one fruit that we give back to God, whereas faithfulness and the other fruits, virtues, and characters are from the Spirit working in us! Faithfulness is authenticity that is so absent today and so badly needed to show the power and motivation for Christian living. Because God is trustworthy with us, we can be faith-worthy in Him (Psalm 119: 89-90; Isaiah 25:1; Matthew 17:19; 25:21; Romans 1:17; 5:1-2; 1 Corinthians 12:9; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 3:16-17; Hebrews 11:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:24)!
- **Gentleness**, sometimes referred to as *Meekness*, is the fruit that will show calmness, personal care, and tenderness in meeting the needs of others. It is to be more than just a personality; it is to be who we are by the work of the Spirit within us. This is not weakness or a lack of strength; rather, it is being humble and gentle toward God and others. This also means being nonresistant to God and His work in us. Gentleness produces a desire and effort to please God and to submit our will and aspirations to His will and what is best. By keeping our focus on Christ with humility, we can endure being personally attacked (Psalm 37:11; Isaiah 40:11; 42:2-3; Galatians 5:22-23; Philippians 4: 5; Matthew 5:5; 11:29; 12:15; Ephesians 4:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:24; 1 Thessalonians 2:7).
- **Self-Control**, sometimes referred to as *Temperance*, is allowing God to be in control of our will and hearts, and to be diligent in seeking the Spirit to enable us. We can know what not to do, and guard the areas in which we are weak. This will allow us to have discipline and restraint, with obedience to God and others. It is not allowing distractions to derail or remove us from His will and plan, so we will not be held back from what Christ has called us to do. This comes down to how we trust in our Lord, we can trust God for the future because we can see what He has done in the past (Proverbs 16:32; 25:28; Romans 13: 12-14; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 9:25-27; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Thessalonians 5: 22; Titus 2:12; Hebrews 12:2; 2 Peter 1:5-7).

<http://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/faith/essentials/growing-in-your-faith/10-ideas-reflecting-the-fruit-of-the-spirit>

<http://www.discipleshiptools.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=48297&columnid=4166>