

GOD JUST TOUCHED ME - WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT

Chapter 9 - THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

The Command to Be Fruitful

The scriptures are full of commands to be fruitful under various circumstances and in differing courses of action. However, in the New Testament God is calling us to be fruitful in a specific way (John 15:1-8, 16). God's life flowing through us permits us to be fruitful. People sometimes see their own worth in the gifts God has given them. In truth, no one is known by the gifts they receive. Gifts indicate only that someone cares. It is by their fruit that they are identified (Matthew 12:33). The enemy can counterfeit gifts to steal us away from God, but cannot counterfeit spiritual fruit in an evil person (Matthew 7:16-20). A sure sign of an indwelling Holy Spirit is the development of the Fruit of the Spirit. God does not desire sacrifices, but obedience to His command to be fruitful. Developing the Fruit of the Spirit is the process of acquiring the family characteristics of the family of God, and is an effect of having a close personal relationship with God.

God specifically desires fruit grown by the Spirit (Galatians 5:22&23). This list describes the character of Christ. Each Fruit of the Spirit is simply love expressed in another form, and God's love is the one thing that is impossible for the enemy to counterfeit. The Fruit of the Spirit is a revelation of the character of God demonstrated through the life of Christ and through the lives of Christians who allow the Spirit to produce it within them. Jesus came to show us how to live so we can become what we were created to be (John 13:15). To be like Jesus we need to think like He did (Philippians 2:5) and act like He did. Becoming like Jesus is a process being worked in us by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17&18). In order to be fruitful and effective the fruit is necessary (2 Peter 1:4-8).

Love

The fruit of the Spirit is love. Love is a decision, not an emotion (romance) or a feeling (affection). Love is a benevolent concern, caring about another and wanting only the best for them. Love is the very nature of our God and Redeemer (1 John 4:8). Love is not an option, but is obedience to the commandments of God (John 14:15). Love must so saturate us that we, like God, become love, and we radiate love both to God and to our fellow man (Matthew 22:37-39). Jesus even commanded a deeper level of love, one that is foreign to most people (John 13:34). That is the kind of love that is willing to die for a brother or sister in Christ. We should be known by our love for each other (John 13:35).

Joy

The fruit of the Spirit is joy. Joy is an inner knowledge of physical, mental, and spiritual health, brought on by a right relationship with our Lord. One of Jesus' last requests to the Father was that we should experience His joy (John 17:13). Joy comes from a Spirit filled life that is gracious and kind, full of good will, and generous. Joy is not a virtuous wish but an enduring quality of the Christian. Having prayers answered brings joy (John 16:24). Knowing that we are being obedient to the Lord brings joy (John 15:10&11). We cannot help but have joy when we are living in His presence and in fellowship with Him, knowing in our heart of hearts that the Creator of the universe loves us.

Peace

The fruit of the Spirit is peace. Peace is freedom from fear, distress, and anxiety, not freedom to do anything you want to do. Peace comes from a right relationship with the author of peace (Isaiah 9:6). Our peace is found only in Him (John 16:33) and the peace we have is His peace given to us (John 14:27). Our peace should not be only with God, but also with each other (Mark 9:50). We

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cannot be in agreement with God unless we are in agreement with each other. God has called us to live in peace (1 Corinthians 7:15_b) by living in the Spirit, not by living in the flesh (Romans 8:6). We must work for harmony with each other if we are to reap the Spirit's peace (Ephesians 4:3). When we are able to do that we will experience a peace that the world cannot comprehend (Philippians 4:7). It is possible to be in the midst of chaos and maintain an undisturbed state of mind.

Long Suffering

The fruit of the Spirit is long-suffering. The emphasis is on "long". The degree of suffering is strictly dependant on your attitude towards the situation. Long suffering means to have extraordinary patience, to be slow to anger or take revenge, bearing injuries, insults, and trouble, and to wait on God to make things right. To our advantage, our God is long-suffering (Numbers 14:18_a). He is steadfast in giving us opportunities to get into a proper relationship with Him (Romans 15:5). Jesus is the personification of patience (1 Timothy 1:16), and so should we become under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If it weren't for Jesus' patience we would all be lost (2 Peter 3:8, 9, 14&15). A Christian should wear patience as a garment (Colossians 3:12). The full development of the Fruit of the Spirit requires that we have patience, because growing fruit is not an event, but a process that takes time (Luke 8:15). Endurance is a necessary step in our transformation into the likeness of Jesus (Romans 5:1-5). There is much to lose by impatience and much to gain by endurance (Hebrews 10:36). Patience is another way of expressing love.

Gentleness

The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness. Gentleness is a quality of character displayed by a mother's tenderness with her newborn child. It is excellence of character that was displayed by Christ (2 Corinthians 10:1). The tenderness of God is what enables us in times of trouble (Psalm 18:35). The gentleness of Jesus is what holds us up under a heavy load (Matthew 11:29). Gentleness is a required part of our character if we are to be effective in bringing others to Christ (2 Timothy 2:24&25). Gentleness is another way of expressing love.

Goodness

The fruit of the Spirit is goodness. Goodness implies decency, kindness, righteousness, honesty, and integrity. Goodness is not only a quality of character but also consist of being good for something, useful for the Lord. When God created the earth He saw that it was good, and in spite of sin, it is still full of His goodness (Psalm 33:5). The one thing that will last, though all else go, is the goodness of God (Isaiah 54:10). It was God's kindness to Israel that saved them in the wilderness (Nehemiah 9:17_b). It is God's kindness to us that saves us now (Ephesians 2:4-7). God is good, all the time. Goodness is one more way of expressing love.

Faith

The fruit of the Spirit is faith. The scriptures have much to say about faith. In common usage the word faith has a variety of uses. a) A set of beliefs, such as Christian faith, Muslim faith, and so on. b) A saving belief, trust, and confidence in Jesus. c) An astonishing confidence in God and an assurance of well-being in times of unusual stress such as faced by the martyrs. The fruit of faith is a saving belief, trust, and confidence in Jesus, believing that He is who He said He was, and that He died to save us from sin and death. Faith is an unquestioning belief that does not require proof (Hebrews 11:1). No one can please God without first having complete trust in Him (Hebrews 11:6). The faith

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that saves us is not of our own doing, but is the work of the Spirit (Ephesians 2:8). It is that same faith that makes us a part of the family of God (Galatians 3:26). That same faith is also the means by which we live (Romans 1:17) and by which we are justified before God (Romans 3:28, Galatians 2:16). What an amazing idea, that through faith we should be credited with the righteousness of Jesus (Romans 3:21-26). That is an idea no human could have invented; it had to originate with our God and Savior. The peace of God also comes through faith (Romans 5:1). Though the world seems to be crashing down around you it is possible to continue on without fear (2 Corinthians 5:7). Healing and forgiveness come through faith (James 5:15). Everything about the Christian way of life has to do with faith, and lack of faith is dangerous (Romans 14:23).

Meekness

The fruit of the Spirit is meekness or humility. Many picture being meek or humble as a beaten dog with its head hanging down and its tail between its legs. Not so! Humility consists of knowing that there is a God, and admitting that we are the creatures, not the Creator. The proud will fall, but the meek will be saved in the end times (Zephaniah 2:3) because humility is greater than honor in the sight of God (Proverbs 15:33). The Lord leads and teaches the meek in His own ways (Psalm 25:9). No better teacher could be found. When the day of God's wrath comes, the meek will be the winners (Psalm 37:11). If you will be humble before the Lord He will reward you Himself (James 4:10). If we truly desire to be saved we must humbly seek God (2 Chronicles 7:14). There was never anyone more humble than Jesus. Though being God, He chose to be a servant to mankind.

Temperance

The fruit of the Spirit is temperance, which is moderation or self-control. Moderation is applicable to all appetites of the flesh and is self-mastery in all works of the flesh. We are to walk in the Spirit, not the flesh, and our moderation should be visible (Philippians 4:5). We must not come under the intoxicating influence of any fleshly appetite (1 Thessalonians 5:4-10). Time is running out and there is no defense for being negligent (Hebrews 2:3).

Against such there is no law!