

Producing Much Fruit

Air Dates: September 27 – October 1, 2021

Day One

Do you sometimes feel as though being a Christian in our culture today is against the law? The Apostle Paul faced the same kind of culture in ministering to Christians in Galatia—except his situation was even worse. Christians were literally persecuted, even killed, for their faith.

But he gave the Galatians a plan for living out their faith in that godless culture—a plan that could never be criticized or demonized—and a plan that would be totally effective. Let me read from Galatians 5:22-23:

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

There is no law against the fruit of the Spirit. That's what the Apostle is telling us. You can display these characteristics anytime, anywhere, without any impediment. No one can stop you; no one can take you to court for being:

Loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled.

Since this is the fruit of the Spirit, it is only *through* the Spirit that this fruit can become evident in your life. However, you have to cooperate with the Spirit, and become intentional about growing this fruit.

I want to talk about practical ways to grow this fruit in your life. And the first fruit is:

#1 - Love

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-6 we see what this love—God's love—is like:

- It is patient and kind
- It does not envy or boast
- It is not arrogant or rude
- It is not irritable or resentful
- It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth
- It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

The love which is produced by God's Spirit is an action, a decision to act in these ways, with or without the feelings. In fact, we can love people we may not even like!

So, here's my challenge to you: Pray that God will help you to love those people you have to deal with, even those that you really don't like. Seek to grow more of this fruit of love.

Day Two

If you had an apple tree that never produced apples, you'd probably think something was wrong with it! As believers in Jesus Christ, if our lives are not producing the fruit of the Spirit, then something is wrong with us spiritually. So, I'm looking at the fruit of the Spirit, as found in Galatians 5 with some practical suggestions on how to make them flourish in your life.

#2 - Joy

I love C.S. Lewis's definition of joy: "Joy is the flag that is flown from the castle of the heart when the King is in residence there."

Would that describe you—that joy is something very evident in your life? You have to make it your goal to let the others know that the King is in residence in your life by being joyful. That means your face will be joyful, your words will be joyful, your attitude will be joyful, and your actions will be joyful. And when you are joyful, believe me, people will notice. It's the best witness you can have for Jesus.

Pray joy into your life each day; ask God to help you focus on all you have to be thankful for, and don't let the world and the devil steal your joy!!

#3 - Peace

Peter tells us that we must pursue peace—work at being peaceful, remember to refocus your mind on the person who is our peace, Jesus Christ. Remember this: Your day is won or lost in the morning hours. So, spend time each morning with the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, and in his Word, and he will impart his peace to you.

A friend came to know Christ because a co-worker was peaceful in the midst of a chaotic work environment. She noticed and finally said to him, "How do you do it?" He shared that it was his faith in Christ which made the difference and recommended that she read the book of John. She began to do that, and after a couple of months, Janet accepted Christ.

And it all started when one person was peaceful in the midst of chaos. What a testimony we could have to our world if we consistently displayed this wonderful fruit of God's Spirit—peace!

Day Three

How do we let the world around us know that we are Christians? The most powerful witness we have is the way we live. If we consistently produce the fruit of the Spirit in our daily lives, as found in Galatians 5, the world will know we are Christians. I'm challenging you—and myself—to become more intentional about producing this fruit.

#4 - Patience

First Thessalonians 5:14 says to "*be patient with everyone.*" Whoa! That's hard to do, isn't it?

It might be helpful for you to list those with whom you have the most difficulty being patient. List the situations that test your patience the most and pray specifically about each of these.

Then, decide what you are going to do when you begin to feel impatient. One sure-fire antidote for those feelings of impatience is to pray a quick prayer and/or quote a verse of scripture. Invoke God's power; turn on the power of God's Spirit in your life at these times, because you can't do this on your own.

#5 - Kindness

What does kindness look like? It looks like common courtesies, like "thank you" and "please." It looks like allowing someone to get in line in front of you or letting a car into the line of traffic in front of you. Kindness is saying words that bring encouragement and comfort. It is taking time to help an elderly person or give a child a

cheery greeting. Kindness may simply be a smile on your face, a friendly hello, a listening ear. Whatever form it takes, we all know and love kindness when we see it, don't we?

Set a goal to do at least one kind thing for someone every day. Then, all through your day look for those opportunities. When you go out of your way to be kind, even in the very small things, it not only makes an impact on those to whom you are kind, it also comes back to you in many ways.

Proverbs 11:17 says that a kind person benefits himself. We reap what we sow, and when we sow kindness, it does indeed benefit us, too.

Day Four

What is goodness? One of the evidences of the fruit of God's Spirit in the life of a believer is goodness. And we're looking at practical ways to grow more spiritual fruit in our lives.

#6 - Goodness

We often say "God is good all the time," but what do we mean by that? Do we mean that God does what I want him to do and answers all my prayers the way I want them answered? Do we mean that God pours blessings on us and therefore he is good?

Good means virtuous, righteous, morally excellent. And of course, God is good all the time. As you focus on being good, that doesn't mean that you're going to try to make everyone happy or jump through everyone's hoops. It means, rather, that you are going to focus on being virtuous, righteous and morally excellent.

Second Peter 1:5 says: "*For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge.*" You may need to dig deep into your heart to root out those things that are not good. It might mean you have to change your television viewing habits, throw away some magazines or novels, stop bad habits of gossiping or complaining, make sure you're always telling the truth.

#7 - Faithfulness

First Corinthians 4:2 says: "*Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*" We can only be of service to God if we are faithful people. You've heard it said that the best ability is dependability. That's another word for faithful. Do you have a reputation for being dependable? Are you known as a faithful person, thorough in the performance of your duties? Do you always keep your promises? Is your word your bond?

A good motto to remember is "Under promise and over deliver." Promise thoughtfully and sparingly, and then keep your promises no matter what! Grow that fruit of faithfulness until it is really big!

Day Five

I'm completing our look at the nine characteristics of the fruit of God's Spirit, as given to us in Galatians 5.

#8 - Gentleness

Jesus described himself as "*gentle and humble in heart*" (Matt. 11:29). Peter tells us that our beauty should not come from outward adornment. "*Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.*" (1 Peter 3:4). Well, no wonder it is of great worth because it is the same spirit of gentleness that Jesus has.

Proverbs 15:1 says, "*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*" Gentleness solves arguments, halts anger, and restores someone who has sinned.

Do you have harsh attitudes toward people? I love this quote from Dairy of Private Prayers: "May I be willing to make the same excuses for others that I make for myself." Are you quick to criticize and judge? The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness, just like Jesus.

#9 - Self-Control

Proverbs 25:28 says, "*Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.*" In Bible times cities had to have walls for protection. When those walls were broken down, anything and anybody could get in, to plunder, to kill, to destroy. And so it is with us when we lack self-control. We open ourselves up to destruction.

Look at your own life right now and ask yourself where your walls are broken down because of your unwillingness to exercise self-control. Even if it is only broken in one spot, the enemy will find that spot, and he will invade you and try to destroy you at that point. So, shore up your broken walls through prayer and maybe ask someone to hold you accountable in that area. That's a good way to grow more self-control in your life.

I have prepared a booklet, which could help you become more intentional about allowing God's Spirit to produce his fruit in your life. This goes into more detail and gives more helps on how you can allow the fruit of God's Spirit to flourish in your life. It is exciting to see that you really can grow in all nine fruits.