

Heading for **HARVEST**

Galatians 5:22-23



A Fruit of the Spirit Study

Joyce Jamerson

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By Joyce Jamerson

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter 1 <i>God's Qualities in Us</i> —Fruit of the Spirit	5
Chapter 2 <i>Disconnected from Christ</i> —Works of the Flesh	12
Chapter 3 <i>Taking Off That Old Self</i> —Putting on Love	19
Chapter 4 <i>1 Corinthians 13</i> —Love	27
Chapter 5 <i>Spirit Dancing</i> —Joy	36
Chapter 6 <i>Who is in Control?</i> —Peace	43
Chapter 7 <i>Stress or Serenity?</i> —Patience and Longsuffering	51
Chapter 8 <i>A Warm Heart</i> —Kindness	58
Chapter 9 <i>Love in Action</i> —Goodness	65
Chapter 10 <i>Get a Grip, a Firm One</i> —Faithfulness	71
Chapter 11 <i>Power Under Control</i> —Gentleness	78
Chapter 12 <i>Restrain Yourself!</i> —Self Control	85
Chapter 13 <i>Soothing Fragrance</i> —Practical Fruit and Living Sacrifices	93
Quicklist	101

Introduction

What exactly is the fruit of the Spirit? Do we even have a point of reference for understanding a spirit? Spirits remind us of haunted houses, witches or séances. Perhaps even ghostbusters, since an unfortunate early translation used the term, Holy Ghost. Galatians 5:22–23 gives us an exact definition. *“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 indwelling of the Spirit is a gift from God; a promise to those who are baptized in the name of Christ, Acts. 2:38. We have never seen Him and the only tangible reference for the Spirit is the appearance of a dove at the baptism of Jesus. The Holy Spirit dwells in us just as the Father and the Son dwell in us, 1 John 4:12–16; 5:11–12. Fellowship with the Godhead results in spiritual blessings that come to every Christian. Developing the fruit of the Spirit is evidence of spiritual growth, so how about being a fruit inspector?

Just before coming to my desk today, I cut into a fresh pineapple. It looked wonderful on the outside; the aroma was tempting and mouth-watering, however, on the inside, it wasn't so fresh. Evidence of decay was already present and my desire for this fruit quickly changed. Instead of its intended purpose, it was spoiled and useless and sadly, ended up in the trash can.

During this study, we will inspect how *we* look on the outside and compare that to what we find on the inside. Women of God show their outer good works quite frequently but the inner self may be more difficult to develop. Growing in the Spirit is a test of putting aside our own desires to develop spiritual fruit; this special fruit that will ripen when we present the right conditions for growth. If music were all notes and scales, there wouldn't be much enjoyment but when all the elements come together, the enjoyment is much deeper. It's the same with Bible study. We won't see much progress until we dig into the Word and put all the elements together. Any music lover knows that music can transcend difficulties and take us to another place; as can Bible study.

Our spiritual fruit basket has quite a variety, but is not the type where you can pick only your favorite and leave the rest. Although we might prefer certain ones above others, the whole of them are the true fruit of the Spirit. The first segment of the fruit is love—the foundation for our growth but the last—self-control can be the snare. If we cannot or will not develop self-control, all the other fruit in the basket will be spoiled and useless. To the contrary, a well developed self-control can come to the rescue if we are losing our joy, peace or patience. Self-control can prevent our decline into sin and bring us back into usefulness.

Spend some time thinking about the nine facets or segments of the fruit. Think how these qualities are in God and if they are in you. Refer to the Quicklist at the end of the book and keep it handy for reference. Pray every day to develop this fruit and we will grow and develop together throughout the study. Hopefully, this attempt will be a springboard for further study and growth. All scriptures are from the NASB, Lockman Foundation, unless otherwise noted.

Chapter 1

God's Qualities in Us

Fruit of the Spirit

"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing," John 15:5.

How often do you experience the battle for your mind? Your good self says to behave in a certain way, but your evil self is pulling your strings, trying to get some co-operation to lead you away from good. Knowing there will be a price to pay, there is still temptation, but the flip side is reward; reward for seeking, learning and doing God's will.

How did Paul put it? *"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me,"* Romans 7:18–20.

Paul is struggling with sin and we as Christians, can identify with his struggle. It's what Barclay defines as warfare between flesh and spirit. Warfare is serious! A real battle with an enemy! Our desire, our manner of life is to be sinless but Satan has his own ways of distracting us, even in small ways. Why, when sitting down to study are there so many distractions? Why, when in prayer, does the mind wander?

Paul continues in Romans 7:22–25, *"For I joyfully concur (delight, NKJV) with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin."*

We are in our own private war. Good self wants to be available for others, to study, teach and visit more; to be a help when we see the needs of others. Bad self is the one that wants to fiddle away time on the internet or watch junk television or something equally nonsensical, when other things need attention; or it may say *I can't* when really *I could*, to the point of involving self in mundane things so there will be a selfish excuse to *not* be available for better things. *I'm too busy* is a flimsy excuse for failing to develop our fruit. Jesus didn't look kindly on the non-productive tree that had no fruit, Matthew 7:18–20.

Paul, writing to brethren in Galatia, pointed out,

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire (lust, NKJV) 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, Galatians 5:16–17.

Paul had good reason for encouraging the Galatians to walk by the Spirit, as well as the warnings about deeds of the flesh. The region of Galatia, as well as Rome and surrounding areas were rampant with sexual immorality in all forms. Marriage was not honored; there was no shame in sexual relationships before marriage or outside marriage; homosexuality was out of control and the profits from legal prostitution were used to erect temples to the gods, *Flesh and Spirit*, Barclay, page 25. These brethren were living their lives in the middle of evil. (Perhaps our own society has just been described!)

Paul had taught these Gentiles on an earlier trip (Acts 13:14—14:23) and was now instructing them again (they were being led astray); reminding them of their liberty in Christ Jesus. They were saved by Him, loved by Him, guided by His Spirit; no longer justified by the law that had now served its purpose. They would live by putting to death the deeds of the body. “*For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God,*” Romans 8:14.

And then, Paul's words come a little closer home. His lists of evil things are not just temptations of long ago; these are things that battle for a place in *our*

lives; things that should no longer be practiced by anyone who has named Christ as their Savior.

“... immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” Galatians 5:19–21.

Paul is good with lists, so he presents another representing the other side; the evidence of being led by the Spirit. When these things are developed in our lives, we *are* being led by the Spirit. Those who belong to Christ have put away the passions and desires mentioned in the previous verses because they are not from the Father, 1 John 2:16–17. When we have access to the Holy Spirit of God, we can know just what God wants. Your spirit entails the depth of you; your loved ones can know you by your spirit and that is how we can know God. It's a relationship. We have a relationship with all three persons in the Godhead, John 16:13.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, against such things there is no law,” Galatians 5:22–23.

Even though there are nine qualities listed, Paul refers to it in the singular; as one fruit. These collective things *are* the fruit of the Spirit. We understand the concept of fruit; the Bible speaks of it often.

- The *fruit of the womb* is a reward, Psalm 127:3
- You shall eat of the *fruit of your hands*, Psalm 128:2
- They will eat the *fruit of their actions*, Isaiah 3:10
- There is *fruit of repentance*, Matthew 3:8
- There is *fruit of righteousness*, Philippians 1:1; Ephesians 5:9
- The *fruit of our lips* is the praise we give to God as is giving thanks to His name, Hebrews 13:15.

- To the negative, disaster is being brought upon the people because of the *fruit of their plans*, Jeremiah 6:19.
- Jesus said His Father is glorified when we bear much fruit (John 15:8), and in verse 4, *we cannot bear fruit unless we abide in Him*.

“It is entirely significant that Paul speaks of the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5:19–22. A work is something a man produces for himself; a fruit is something that is produced by a power which he does not possess. Man cannot make a fruit,” *Flesh and Spirit*, Barclay, page 21.

In other words, we can get into enough trouble all on our own; all by ourselves, but producing good has to come from another power; we need help!

Fruit grows—tiny at first—but still fruit. When seeing tiny buds on our fruit trees, we may be calculating how many apples or peaches can be harvested, but they have to develop! The right soil, the right conditions and the right seed will produce good fruit. In this battle for the mind, we are to grow in these nine things that make up the fruit of the Spirit. The battle can be won by setting our minds on things of the Spirit, making sure our hearts (soil) are right; letting ourselves be led by this Spirit through the Word (seed), so we can bring glory to our Maker.

The familiar Psalm 119:105, “*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*” is a favorite word picture. Our modern application can be solar lighting. Solar lighting outlines sidewalks and driveways; tiny lights that certainly have power on their own, but shine better as a group. They are powered by the sun. Interestingly, the same can be said for us. We have little power on our own, but shine better when in a group, and *our* light is powered by the **So**n. The Word shows us the way.

In his *New Testament Commentary*, John MacArthur has this to say: “The Spirit’s provision of fruit might be compared to a man standing on a ladder in an orchard, picking the fruit and dropping it into a basket held by a helper

below. No matter how much fruit is picked and dropped, the helper will not receive any unless he is standing under the ladder with his basket ready,” *New Testament Commentary*, John MacArthur, Galatians 5:22–23.

The Spirit will help us develop this fruit as we grow in the Word. Are we standing under the ladder—the Word—with our baskets ready? What magnificent growth opportunities (blessings) God provided when He gave us His Spirit.

- Jesus sent us a Helper, John 16:7–8.
- We are given His Spirit when we obey Him, John 7:37–39; Acts 2:38; 5:32.
- Through the Holy Spirit, we see God’s love and how it has been poured out, into our hearts, Romans 5:5.
- He has given us life and peace through the Spirit, Romans 8:6.
- The Spirit helps our weakness and intercedes for us, Romans 8:26.
- He would grant us strength through His Spirit, Ephesians 3:16.
- He has given us the Word: “*the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,*” Ephesians 6:17.

Contemplate the above list to see what benefits we would lose if we didn’t have the Spirit. Consider having no access to God; no intercession in prayer and no guidance; what a dismal picture!

“Without the guidance of the Spirit, the Bible is just words; it can inform us but it cannot lead us. The Spirit opens our minds to the truths within God’s Word, brings that word to life and thus directly affects our hearts,” *The Holy Spirit of God*, Chad Sychtysz.

There is a small botanical garden close to my house, and especially in springtime, there is such peace and hope in this garden. Plants peeking through the ground; color here and there; the expectation of growth. The beautiful blooms, towering trees and cultivation of unusual and exotic plants give testimony to the hours of care that must have taken place in order to have that enjoyment. Proper growth requires soil with nutrients, planting,

fertilizer, sunshine and rain (more nourishment), as well as the right knowledge and a schedule of spraying to keep away blights and insects.

Spiritual growth requires a student, an atmosphere conducive to study, a planned schedule and nourishment gained from the Word. Distraction is around every corner, but the effort has to be put forth in order to grow and it won't happen in a 45-minute class on Sunday mornings! Jesus guided the apostles into all truth, and that same truth helps us. Through His Word, we have a Helper; always ready to teach, John 14:26. Are you ready to grow?

*Those that be planted in the house of the LORD,
shall flourish in the courts of our God.
They shall still bring forth fruit in old age;
They shall be fat and flourishing,
To shew that the LORD is upright; He is my rock,
and there is no unrighteousness in Him, Psalm 92:13–15 NKJV.*

Questions for Study and Growth

1. Compare living by the flesh with living by the Spirit.
2. What is the evidence of being led by the Spirit?
3. Why does a tree or plant stop bearing fruit?
4. In what ways can *we* stop bearing fruit? (Paul struggled within himself. How hard is it to admit that we struggle?)

5. What did Jesus say would happen when we bear fruit?

6. How can the battle for the mind be won? (3 things)

7. What does spiritual growth require?

8. List the benefits of being led by the Spirit. What would we miss if there were no Holy Spirit?

Sharing: You are ready to sit down and study with your Bible, workbook and any needed resources but your mind is frayed and there never seems to be enough time. Discuss ways to avoid distractions.

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