

Heading for **HARVEST**

Galatians 5:22-23



A Fruit of the Spirit Study

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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.

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*

- 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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