

COLLECTIVE

Life in the Spirit Series (Lesson 4) – The Fruit of the Spirit

Our connect group lessons this year will focus primarily on Galatians 5.

Read: Galatians 5:16-25

Galatians 5:22-23

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.

Here we have a cluster of nine Christian graces which seem to portray a Christian's attitude to God, to other people and to himself.

Love, joy, peace – these trio of Christian virtues primarily concern our attitude towards God, for a Christian's first love is his love for God, his chief joy is his joy in God and his deepest peace is his peace with God.

Patience, kindness, goodness – these trio are social virtues, manward rather than Godward in their direction. Patience is longsuffering towards those who wrong, aggravate, offend, or persecute you. Kindness is a question of our disposition – the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate. Goodness is your conduct in words and deeds.

Faithfulness, gentleness, self-control – Faithfulness appears to describe a person's reliability. Gentleness is that humble meekness which Christ exhibited. And both are aspects self-control.

So, we could say that the primary direction of "love, joy, peace" is Godward, "patience, kindness, goodness" is manward and "faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" is selfward.

All of these are "the fruit of the spirit", the natural produce that appears in the lives of Spirit led Christians. No wonder Paul adds that "against such there is no law".

The Unity of the Fruit

"Love believes all things, hopes all things, ..." (1 Corinthians 13:7)

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

These two statements are remarkable. Though Paul talks of "faith, hope, love" in 1 Corinthians 13:13, in vs 7 he says that love has **faith** and has **hope**. If you have love you will have faith and hope!

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In Galatians 5:22, Paul deliberately uses the **singular word “fruit”** to describe a whole list of character traits. From this we learn a very important point for understanding and discerning the fruit of the Spirit.

This means that **the real fruit of the Spirit always grow up together**. When we look at the list of traits in the “fruit lists” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Galatians 5:22-23) we notice that we are naturally stronger in some than the others. But our strengths, apart from the Holy Spirit, are due to natural temperament, or natural self-interest.

For example, some people are temperamentally gentle and diplomatic (gentleness). But this could be due **not** to the Holy Spirit as such people are usually not bold or courageous (faithfulness).

Because of what Paul says about the unity of the fruit, this means that gentleness is not real spiritual humility, but just temperamental sweetness. John says, “if a man says, “I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar”. Notice that he does not say, “if a man loves God but doesn’t love his brother, he is unbalanced”. No, he says that he is a liar!

The true love of God therefore must include love to others (kindness). If they are not all there, they are not there at all.

There are many cases of this. Some people seem happy and bubbly and are good at making new friends, but they are unreliable and cannot keep friends. They are unfaithful. Their joy is also not real joy but just extroversion.

Some people seem very peaceful (steady), but they are not kind and gentle. This is not real peace, but indifference and perhaps cynicism. People like this get through life not wanting to be hurt, but they have become desensitized and unapproachable.

The definitions of the fruit

1) Agape – love

Definition – to serve a person for their good and intrinsic value, not for what the person brings you.

Opposite – Fear: self-protection and abusive.

Counterfeit – Selfish affection. Helping someone but really helping self. Attracted not to the person, but to how this person’s love makes you feel about yourself.

2) Chara – joy

Definition – Delight in God and his salvation for sheer beauty and worth of who he is.

Opposite – Hopelessness, despair.

Counterfeit – Elation that comes with blessings not the Blesser! Mood swings based on circumstances.

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3) Irene – peace

Definition – Confidence and rest in the wisdom and sovereignty of God more than your own.

Opposite – Anxiety and worry.

Counterfeit – Indifference, apathy, not caring about something – “I don’t care”.

4) Makrothumia – patience

Definition – Ability to take trouble (from others or life) without blowing up. To suffer joyfully.

Opposite – Resentment toward God and others.

Counterfeit – Cynicism. Self-righteousness. “This is too small to be bothered about.”

5) Chrestotes – kindness

Definition – Practical kindness with vulnerability out of deep security.

Opposite – Envy. Unable to rejoice in other’s joy or success.

Counterfeit – Manipulative good deeds. “Right hand knowing what left hand is doing”.

Self-congratulation and self-righteousness.

6) Agathosune – goodness; integrity

Definition – Honesty, transparency. Being the same in one situation as another.

Opposite – Hypocrisy.

Counterfeit – Truth without love. “Getting it off the chest” for your sake.

7) Pistis – faithfulness

Definition – Loyalty. Courage. To be principle-driven, committed, utterly reliable. True to one’s word.

Opposite – Opportunist. Fair weather friend.

Counterfeit – Love without truth. Being loyal when you should be willing to confront or challenge.

8) Prautus – gentleness; humility

Definition – Ego-less.

Opposite – Superiority; self-absorbed, glorify self.

Counterfeit – Inferiority; self-absorbed, self-conscious.

9) Egkrateia – self-control

Definition – The ability to choose the important and what is the right and correct thing to do.

Opposite – Driven, compulsive, uncontrolled.

Counterfeit – Willpower through pride.

Reflection/discussion:

What have you learnt about yourself from this list? Do you have the right definition of fruit in your life? In what fruit are you weaker in?