

# The Fruit of the Spirit

*Galatians 5:16-24*



### READING:

Grab your Bible or Bible app and read [Galatians 5:22-24](#). If you have a child who is of reading age allow them to read as this will help keep their attention and with reading comprehension.

### GAME ON:

- Which is the hardest fruit of the Spirit for you to have?
- Which is the easiest fruit of the Spirit for you to have?
- What does it mean to “crucify the sinful nature?” (*Allowing the Holy Spirit to rule in your life not sin.*)

*Pray for the fruits that each family member expressed being the hardest.*

### BONUS ROUND:

*(Hands on activity to better understand the lesson.)*

**Supplies Needed:** Poster or large paper. Markers.

Draw a tree. Then draw different types of fruit, large enough to write the fruits of the Spirit on. (*ex: draw an apple and write LOVE on it, then a strawberry and write PEACE, etc.*) Make sure it is bold and easy to read. Hang it in your house to remind you during the week.

### LEVEL UP:

*(More In Depth. A good challenge for older students.)*

Look at [Galatians 5:22-23](#) again. As a family agree on hand motions/signs for each word or part of the verse. Practice over and over again until you can memorize the verse as a family. Continue to sign to each other during the week to remind family members the fruit we should see in our lives.



## ADULT DEVOTIONALS

### WEEK 4: MONDAY

*“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.”*

*- Galatians 5:22-23*

Every fall, my family looks forward to making the trip to Warwick, NY to go apple picking. One year we went in early September on a weekend that happened to be peak season for Honeycrisp apples – our favorite! At the orchard we went to, all the different types of apple trees were marked with signs identifying them. As we were walking through the orchard, we saw the signs marking the Honeycrisp apple trees, but it wasn't until we saw the fruit on the trees that we knew for sure.

If you have been in church for a little while, you may recognize Galatians 5:22-23 as The Fruit of the Spirit. These are nine character traits that the Holy Spirit produces in the lives of Christians. Just as I recognized Honeycrisp apples trees by the fruit, others should recognize us as Christians by the “fruit” we produce in our lives.

To understand this passage, it is helpful to understand the larger context in which it was written. Paul was not happy with the church in Galatia. His letter, while ultimately written in love and for the building up of the church, has a reprimanding tone. Throughout the letter Paul establishes what the true Gospel of Christ is, his authority to proclaim the Gospel, and the differences between living in the flesh, as the world does, or in the Spirit as we are called to.

Throughout this week we will spend time studying the fruit of the spirit. We will use God's word to convict us as needed, and to encourage us to live a fruit-filled life. Reflect on this passage today. Is the fruit of the spirit evident in your life?

**Take time today to slowly read through Galatians 5:22-23 again. Which fruits are abundant in your life? Which Fruits of the Spirit do you desire to increase in your life? Thank God for the gifts of the Fruit of the Spirit in your own life and others around you as well.**

## ADULT DEVOTIONALS

### WEEK 4: TUESDAY

*“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

— Galatians 5:19-21

Yesterday we read about the character traits that mark a Spirit-filled life and today we are looking at the desires of the flesh. It is interesting how in verse 19 Paul says the acts of the flesh are obvious. Why do you think he used the word obvious? To whom is it obvious?

The reality is that deep down we all know when we are acting in the flesh, and this applies to the believer and the nonbeliever alike. The warning in verse 21 that “those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God” may also be a reminder to other verses in Romans:

*“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

— Romans 5:8

*“For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.”*

— Romans 8:13

The sweet message of Christianity, and one of the major differentiators from all other religions, is summarized in Romans 5:8. We are imperfect sinners who have been given grace by a perfect Savior. When we accept that grace, we are empowered by the Spirit to live a new life we couldn't have otherwise (Romans 8:13). Will we still struggle with the desires of the flesh? Sure, but by God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, we have the power to overcome it.

**Take some time today to confess to God the ways in which you have been living according to the flesh. If you feel comfortable, write these things down and then when you are finished, draw a large cross through what you've written. Pray for God's grace and power each day to resist the temptation.**

## ADULT DEVOTIONALS

### WEEK 4: WEDNESDAY

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."*

— John 15:1-4

I always assumed gardening was so easy and simple. You put seeds in the ground, add water and sun, and in a few weeks/months you will have a bountiful crop to enjoy! This was true for me since my husband is actually the one who takes care of the garden. Little did I know until recently that there are many other things he does for his plants and flowers in the garden so that they will thrive.

Beyond watering and ensuring the garden gets enough sun each day, he also looks for branches that don't bear fruit or a crop, and ones that he can prune back that will make them more fruitful. As we see in John 15, God is the gardener and Jesus is the true vine. God does things in our life so that we can bear much fruit. Does this sound like something you can relate to in your life? We must "remain in Him" for this to be possible. Take a look at the rest of the passage—

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*

— John 15:5-8

By remaining in God and pursuing the Fruits of the Spirit in our lives, we will bear much fruit. This will be a sign to others that we belong to Him. That is so exciting that we can be true representations of Christ on earth to others in such a tangible way!

**Take a walk or a look outside today. Visit your garden or take a look at a neighbor's flowers. As you are doing so, use the visual as a reminder of how God cares for us when we remain in Him and praise Him for doing that!**



## ADULT DEVOTIONALS

### WEEK 4: THURSDAY

*"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing."*

— 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Thinking back to our study of the Fruit of the Spirit this week, do you remember what the first fruit was listed in Galatians 5? *Love*. Love is the first mentioned, which can lead us to think it is significant. Looking through the rest of the Bible, there are so many times where Jesus talks about loving one another.

*"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

— John 13:35

What a simple directive and yet one that can be hard and that Christians can sometimes get wrong. We want others to know we are disciples of Jesus and we can use the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be more loving towards one another.

As 1 Corinthians 13 continues, it's almost as if we are looking at a parallel to the Fruit of the Spirit. The qualities of love are reminders of the Fruit of the Spirit and a great encouragement for how we can love others in the power of the Holy Spirit.

*"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails... And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."*

— 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 13

**Take a moment to read these verses in 1 Corinthians again and flip back to Galatians 5 and the Fruit of the Spirit from Monday. Look for similarities in the two and then take time to pray and reflect on what it would truly look like to follow Jesus' command and love one another really well.**

## ADULT DEVOTIONALS

### WEEK 4: FRIDAY

*"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves again be burdened by a yoke of slavery."*

— Galatians 5:1

As Americans, we love the idea of freedom. Imperfect as the execution of freedom was, this country was founded on the principles that all men have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. So when Paul says that Christ sets us free (from the flesh), it's appealing to us. When was the last time you thought about how Christ set you free? Or are you still wondering if you even need to be set free to begin with?

Every November a good friend of mine has a party to celebrate his freedom in Christ. Similar to a birthday, he celebrates the day he accepted Jesus as a reminder of how he was once a slave to the flesh, but he is now free in the spirit. What a cool thing to do!

*"You, my brothers and sister, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather serve one another humbly in love."*

— Galatians 5:13

The greatest example of serving humbly in love is Jesus. Jesus washed his disciple's feet (including Judas, who would betray Him). Jesus was friends to the sinners and outcasts. Jesus gave his life for all of us that we may be reconciled to God.

Today let us reflect on the example of Jesus, and how He used His freedom to serve others in love.

**Dear Lord, thank you for freeing us from the flesh by the Holy Spirit. Thank you for giving us Jesus as the ultimate example of how we should use our freedom to serve others humbly in love. We pray that you make the Chapel a place that is known for how we love you and love others. We pray this in your holy and precious name. Amen.**



## MAIN POINT

***We please God when we obey Him and demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in compassion for others rather than indulge in our selfish desires.***

## INTRODUCTION

When you were young, who had the most power over your behavior? Why were they so influential, either positively or negatively? Who or what influences you the most today?

Describe a time when you believed confidently that the Holy Spirit directed you to take a specific action. What does that mean? How does the Holy Spirit direct a person?

Kids learn things by watching and observing the world. But there are other things (like world history, science, math, etc.) that need to be described for them. They would never know the significance of Abraham Lincoln's life if it weren't for history books and people to interpret them. Kids need someone to tell them things if they are to grow in knowledge and understanding.

In a similar way, we need the Holy Spirit to reveal God's truth to us. We can't grow spiritually without His work in our lives. We lack understanding, especially when it comes to spiritual truth, until the Holy Spirit guides us and teaches us. Last week we talked about how the Spirit gives us life through adoption. This week we will talk about how the Spirit works in us to shape us into the people God has called us to be.

## UNDERSTANDING

### > READ GALATIANS 5:16-21.

Paul had warned against the disastrous results of vicious infighting among the Galatian Christians (see Gal. 5:15). In verses 16-18, he gave the antidote to such poisonous behavior: following the Spirit's leadership. He contrasted the Spirit with the flesh and highlighted the conflict between them. He emphasized that the Spirit's leadership precludes enslavement to the law.

How would you define the term "desires of the flesh" in your own words (v. 16)? In contrast, what does "walking" (or living) by the Spirit mean?

What characterizes a life guided by the sinful nature? What about a life characterized by the Spirit?

The Holy Spirit leads us to do what God wants, not what our sinful natures want. The imperative walk is a Hebrew expression for "live," with the idea of conduct or lifestyle. Its tense conveys continuous action. The phrase "by the Spirit" can be rendered "in the Spirit"—in the sphere the Spirit governs. To keep on living in the Spirit is to continually live by His power—to go where He is going.



Why do you think Paul chose these specific sins to mention? Do you see any commonalities among the sins in these verses?

What makes these sins “evident” (v. 19)? How are they “against the Spirit” (v. 17)? How would our world be different if Christians let the Spirit lead their actions?

What is the significance of Paul’s warning in verse 21?

The phrase “and the like” indicates that Paul does not consider his list exhaustive. He again gave the Galatians advance warning: people with lifestyles characterized by the works of the flesh will not inherit God’s kingdom. Inherit means “to share in.” The kingdom of God is His rule, the sphere of His grace. People who consistently perform the works of the flesh are not following the Spirit and indeed are not Christians. Conversely, the Spirit’s activity in Christians produces a cluster of virtues that gives evidence of believers belonging to Christ (see vv. 22-26).

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**> READ GALATIANS 5:22-26.**

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Verses 22-23 list what is commonly referred to as the “fruit of the Spirit,” or the evidence of the Holy Spirit’s presence in Christians’ lives. Paul lists nine traits that together make up the fruit of the Spirit. It’s important to note that the language used in the passage is singular—fruit. Our intention shouldn’t be to break up the nine as individual traits that we may or may not exhibit at any given time. Embodying the fruit of the Spirit is the result of God’s work in our lives. When we demonstrate peace, goodness, or gentleness, portions of His character are being reflected through us.

Look back over the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in this passage. Which element is the most difficult for you to reflect? Which comes more easily?

How does the fruit of the Spirit compare to the works of the flesh mentioned in verses 19-21?

Why are these characteristics called “fruit”? What is the difference between “works” (v. 19) and “fruit”?

What impact does the fruit of the Spirit have on your relationships with others?

If verse 26 describes the attitude of someone not in tune with the Spirit, what’s the attitude of someone who is?

Paul called for the Galatian believers to follow the Spirit’s leadership and avoid destructive attitudes and behavior (see 5:25-26). The Spirit’s presence in our lives gives us the power we need to live out our faith. He replaces those sinful works with His fruit, and as a result we’re able to love and serve others rather than ourselves. Service is the opposite of the conceited life pictured in verse 26.

APPLICATION

In what ways have you recently been reminded of the Spirit's presence and power in your life?  
How can you be more aware of and sensitive to the Spirit's presence and power?

What advice would you give a friend who is dismayed because he or she is not seeing much of the fruit of the Spirit in his or her life?

How does the presence of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives make our lives and love of Christ attractive to unbelievers?

PRAY

Thank God for the freedom He provides in Christ for those who trust Him. Pray that the Spirit would guide each person to use that freedom to love others as we grow in Christlike character.

MEMORIZE

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,  
<sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. -Galatians 5:22-23

## COMMENTARY

## GALATIANS 5:16-26

5:16. Instead of biting and devouring one another (see 5:15), the Galatian Christians were to walk by the spirit. The imperative walk is a Hebrew expression for “live” with the idea of conduct or lifestyle. The phrase by the Spirit can be rendered “in the Spirit”—in the sphere the Spirit governs. To keep on living in the Spirit is to continually live by His power—to go where He is going. Paul followed his command with a promise: Ordering our lives according to the Spirit’s guidance will prevent believers from ever carrying out the desire of the flesh. Consistently living in the Spirit would enable believers to overcome sin’s pull, which the law could not do.

5:17. Every Christian is a walking civil war. Flesh and spirit are in perpetual conflict; they are diametrically opposed to each other and vie for dominance in believers’ lives. What the flesh desires is antagonistic to what the spirit desires for Christians. The language is that of unrelenting warfare for control of believers’ lives. The Spirit strives to prevent believers from giving in to evil; the flesh tries to thwart the Spirit’s work.

5:18. Paul emphasized that active cooperation with the Spirit and constant reliance on His power would enable the Galatian believers to experience freedom instead of bondage. If they consistently followed the Spirit’s leadership, they would not be under the law. The Judaizers contended that obeying the law enables people to overcome their base desires; yet Paul knew from experience that the law was powerless to suppress people’s lower nature (see Rom. 7:7-8,14-25). Paul maintained strongly that only following the Spirit’s guidance could enable people to overcome evil and experience the freedom of grace. The inner struggle between believers’ old nature and the Spirit would continue, but following the Spirit’s leading would empower them to be victorious.

5:19. Paul listed the results of acting on “the desires of the flesh” (v. 16). With 15 words in verses 19-21 he cataloged the works of the flesh. The word works refers to what issues from living in the flesh—people’s lower natures. All the impulses or drives Paul included are potentially good, but the base nature seeks to distort and pervert them. Paul began by naming three sexual sins that issue from our sinful nature’s aggression in its warfare with the Spirit.

5:20. Paul next addressed works of the flesh in the religious realm. The word idolatry referred primarily to worshiping pagan gods. Broadly defined, idols are anything or anyone people serve and obey above God. Sorcery described the occult, which exposed practitioners to demonic control and often involved drugs.

Paul’s third category of the flesh’s works relates to people’s interactions. Significantly, he listed sinful attitudes, equating them with sinful acts. Hatreds means “hostilities” and has the idea of personal animosities. Strife has the sense of contentiousness expressed in arguments and disputes. Jealousy can mean “zeal” in the positive sense of healthy aspiration. Here it has the negative thrust of malice. Outbursts of anger describes a quick temper that leads to fits of rage. Selfish ambition has the idea of a partisan spirit that uses any means to win personal victory. Dissensions and factions are closely related and describe an eagerness to choose sides in an argument.

5:21. The term envy has the sense of ill will or spite. Paul ended his catalog of the flesh’s works with drunkenness and carousing. This conduct was common in that era, often in connection with the worship of pagan deities. With the phrase and anything similar, Paul lumped other obvious works of the flesh with those he had listed. He again gave the Galatians advance warning: people with lifestyles characterized by the works of the flesh will not inherit God’s kingdom. People who consistently perform the works of the flesh are not following the Spirit and therefore may well not be Christians.

5:22a. Paul contrasted the fruit of the spirit to the works of the flesh. Fruit refers to virtues only the Spirit can cultivate and bring to full growth in believers’ lives. The word fruit is singular. Genuine believers exhibit a cluster of virtues characteristic of living in the Spirit.



The first virtue is love. The Greek language has three other words for love. This one, agape, is God's kind of love: determined good will that acts for others' best interests. It is not given based on emotion in the giver or merit in the object. Joy differs markedly from happiness. Happiness depends on favorable circumstances. Joy is a deep celebration of relationship with God no matter what the circumstances are. Peace is much more than absence of conflict. The word has the idea of wholeness and well-being under God's rule that produces spiritual calmness in the face of difficulties.

5:22b. The next virtues in the cluster of Spirit-produced fruit pertain to believers' relationships with others—their social virtues. Patience is slowness to become angry, the capacity to “put up with a lot.” Kindness is gentleness, thoughtfulness, and consideration in dealing with others. It is not sentimentality. It has the sense of being agreeable, obliging, or pleasant. Goodness is moral excellence, and much more. The word carries the idea of active generosity and compassion toward others—of doing more than justice requires. We might define goodness as kindness in action. Faith has the idea of faithfulness, trustworthiness, or loyalty in relationships with others.

5:23. Gentleness conveys the sense of strength under control. It was used of animals that people tamed and disciplined to carry riders or pull loads. The Spirit enables Christians to exercise disciplined strength in relating to others. Self-control is mastery over emotions, especially over sensual desires. It is the spiritual strength that leads to moral purity. By saying, against such things there is no law, Paul meant that the presence of the fruit of the Spirit removes the need for the law's restraints. One purpose of the law was to prevent evil; but Spirit-empowered Christians not only fulfill the law in principle, but go far beyond what it requires.

5:24. At the time of conversion, genuine believers put to death (have crucified) the old nature by the Spirit's power. Those who belong to Christ are people who have placed faith in Him. At conversion, the war with the flesh's passions and desires—evil prompting and cravings—has been won. Skirmishes between the old nature and the Spirit's leading continue, but believers' ultimate victory is assured.

5:25. The phrase if we live by the spirit does not express doubt. The Greek construction expresses certainty: “Because we live by the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is the source of our new spiritual life, so we must also follow Him. Paul exhorted the Galatian believers to order their lives by relying daily on the Spirit's guidance. Doing so would result in a Christian lifestyle exhibiting exemplary attitudes and actions.

5:26. Paul ended this section of his letter with an exhortation. Literally, he called on the Galatian Christians to stop some destructive attitudes. These attitudes were products of the flesh; they were not evidences of living by the Spirit.