

Fruit of the Spirit Study

Galatians 5:22-23



But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ~Galatians 5:22-23

This passage lists 9 fruits of the Spirit. For this study, focus on one fruit per week, striving to grow spiritually in that particular area.

Each fruit will be defined, and there will be several verses listed in connection with it to be memorized and/or meditated on throughout the week. (You may even want to copy each of these in a notebook under a heading of the fruit of the spirit you're studying that week.) Read the character study, thinking about how the Bible character exemplified that particular fruit of the Spirit, then work through the discussion points/questions. Finally, choose one or all of the application assignments for the week to help you bear fruit in that area.

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### Week #1 – LOVE

Love - Greek word: agape' – good will, benevolence, esteem, to prefer

Verses for memorization and meditation - John 13:34; John 13:35; John 15:9; Romans 12:9; I Corinthians 13:4-7; I John 4:7-8

CHARACTER STUDY: The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

1. Think about why the priest and Levite crossed by on the other side of the road.

- Fear? Fear of contamination, association? What if the beaten man died as they came in contact with him? They would then be defiled and considered unclean. That would hinder their religious duties at the temple. They might have been in fear for their own lives. What if the robbers were still around? I John 4:18, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear..."

- Inconvenience? The beaten man was a fellow Jew, a brother of the priest and Levite, yet it could be that they just didn't want to take the time or make the effort or bear the cost of helping. Psalm 38:11, "My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague, and my kinsmen stand afar off." Philippians 2:4, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also for the interests of others."
- List any other possible reasons you can think of:

2. Who do you relate to in this parable, and why? Do you ever let fear or inconvenience keep you from showing love to another like the priest and Levite? Or when there is a need, do you put aside your own schedule, and make time and effort to fill that need with love and compassion, even bearing the expense without complaint if necessary like the good Samaritan?

#### APPLICATION:

- Family: Love your husband and kids according to I Corinthians 13:4-8. This can be a challenge to put into practice! Sometimes we find ourselves putting forth our best for everyone else but "letting our hair down" in the home, not always making the efforts that we should to demonstrate love – being patient and kind, not being easily provoked, not putting our own wants and needs first, etc.
- Brothers/sisters in Christ: Some people make it really easy to love them while others can make it a little more challenging. But if we are going to claim that we love God, then we must also love our brethren. If there is someone in your church family that you have struggled to love as you should, make an effort to do something thoughtful for them this week to show that you care about them. I John 4:20; Romans 12:10
- Enemies: Make a list of those who you might consider an enemy. Pray for each by name. If you have opportunity, show them love through your words and/or actions. Luke 6:27-35. \*Note the end of v. 35, "For He (God) is kind to the unthankful and evil."

## Week #2 –JOY

Joy - Greek word: chara – delight, gladness

Verses for memorization and meditation - Luke 2:10; Luke 15:10; John 15:11; John 16:24; Romans 15:13

CHARACTER STUDY: Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39)

1. Jeremiah 15:16 says, “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.” The Ethiopian eunuch was consuming the word of God, reading from Isaiah 53 which is the suffering servant passage. Verses which contain such pain and sorrow as they describe the punishment our Savior would endure also serve to create joy in our hearts when we grasp and appreciate the great love behind His sacrifice and the hope of salvation it offers to us. Read Isaiah 53.

2. Do others in the world who know you are a Christian see you living a joyful life in Christ? If not, examine the reasons as to why not, and work on making needed changes in your life. Christ lives in us and should be evident to those around us, not in living a life of perfection which we cannot do, but in a life that exhibits a deep and abiding joy in all circumstances because of the hope that we have in our Savior.

APPLICATION:

- Sing from the Psalms. James 5:13b
- Remember the joy of your salvation. Write down the thoughts and feelings you had on the day you obeyed the gospel and began a new life in Christ.
- Make a list of the good and perfect gifts God has blessed you with and which give you joy. Spend time in prayers of thanksgiving for specific things.

## Week #3 –PEACE

Peace - Greek word: eire'ne' (i-ray'-nay) – quietness, rest

Verses for memorization and meditation - Isaiah 26:3; John 14:27; Romans 12:18; Philippians 4:6-7;

II Thessalonians 3:16; Hebrews 12:14; I Peter 3:11

CHARACTER STUDY: Jesus (Mark 4:35-41)

1. Jesus had peace in the midst of the storm. Why was that, and how can those facts comfort us and give us peace during difficult times in our lives?

2. According to Philippians 4:6-7 *when* do we have the peace that passes all understanding?

APPLICATION:

- When feeling stressed, anxious, or upset, try the three P's to have peace:
  - Pause: Stop, quiet your mind, and focus on the Father. Psalm 46:10, "Be still and know that I am God."
  - Pray: Isaiah 26:3 reminds us that we will have perfect peace when our mind is focused on the Lord. Spend time pouring out your heart to Him in prayer.
  - Praise: It's hard to continue to feel upset and anxious when we are praising the Lord.
- Pursue peace with others. Easier said than done, but when we work on growing the fruit of peace in our own lives, it helps us to live peaceably with those around us. Work on giving soft answers which can turn away wrath. (Prov. 15:1)

## Week #4 – LONGSUFFERING (PATIENCE)

Longsuffering - Greek word: makrothumia (mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah) – patience, forbearance

Verses for memorization and meditation - Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 1:11; Colossians 3:12; II Timothy 4:2; James 5:10

CHARACTER STUDY: Job (Job 1 – 2:10)

1. *Patience in the biblical sense is to “bear up under.” When I think about this, I always picture in my mind a scene from a movie called “Unbroken” about a young American man who was imprisoned in a Japanese camp during WWII. There was a Japanese officer who was trying to break the will and the spirit of this young man so he made him stand for hours holding a heavy wooden beam. If he dropped the beam or let it touch the ground, he would be shot. The young man was almost at his breaking point when the Japanese officer got in his face and told him to just give up, just die. The young man lifted his head, looked him straight in the eye, then hoisted the heavy wooden beam up over his head as high as he could hold it up. This is what I picture long suffering to be like. We are bearing up under a heavy load, a burden that wears on us and almost wears us out, but as Satan is taunting us to give up and to give in, we hold that burden higher and endure. This was the patience of Job. This is the patience we are to bear as fruit in our Christian lives.*

2. *How does the Lord describe Job in 1:8 and 2:3? Job endured tremendous suffering despite being a righteous man. List all of the reasons you can think of as to why the righteous suffer. Now looking at your list, think about how cultivating patience helps us bear up under suffering.*

#### **APPLICATION:**

- *Read II Peter 3:9 and consider how God is patient with you. Meditate on this often to help you to be patient with others.*
- *People who are impatient are often referred to as having a “short fuse.” Brainstorm some techniques you can develop and put into practice that will help you to be a “long-fused” person. For example, maybe it helps you to calm down and practice patience by counting slowly, taking deep breaths, reciting scriptures to yourself about patience, praying for help in this area, etc.*

## **Week #5 –KINDNESS**

*Kindness - Greek word: chre'stote's (khray-stot'-ace) – goodness, gentleness, uprightness*

*Verses for memorization and meditation - Proverbs 31:26; I Corinthians 13:4; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12*

## CHARACTER STUDY: David (II Samuel 9)

1. David was seeking to show kindness to someone who was related to a man he considered his enemy. He didn't have to do this; he chose to do this. David was told of Mephibosheth, the grandson of Saul and son of Jonathon, who was lame in both his feet. David had an opportunity to be kind to one who did not know him personally and who would be limited as to repaying any kindness shown to him, but he seized that opportunity. What did David do for Mephibosheth, and what effect would that kindness have had on Mephibosheth's life?

2. It is easy to be kind to those who are kind to us. The challenge comes in showing kindness to those who have "rubbed us the wrong way." Doing a kind deed in those situations may be difficult, but it can be even harder to actually speak kind words to those people. The virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 had the "law of kindness" on her tongue, that is, she spoke kindly to others. Find and list as many scriptures as you can that deal with speaking in a kind or gracious way.

### APPLICATION:

- Plan to be kind – Think about situations that can create instant irritation or annoyance for you, such as someone cutting in line at the store or something your husband or kids may do habitually that bothers you. Be proactive by thinking about how you can respond in a way that is kind instead of reacting with typical irritation. Planning your response of kindness can help you put it into practice when the time comes.
- Spread the sunshine of kindness – Think of someone who could really use a boost by being shown some kindness. In particular, choose someone who cannot do anything in return. For example, someone who is shut in, someone at the nursing home who doesn't receive visitors, a homeless person, someone at your congregation that most people may ignore, someone having a hard time (financially, emotionally, physically), etc. Do something kind that is appropriate to their situation and would cheer them.

## Week #6 –GOODNESS

Goodness - Greek word: *agathosune* (ag-ath-o-soo'-nay) – uprightness of heart and life

Verses for memorization and meditation - Exodus 34:6; Psalm 23:6; Romans 2:4; Romans 15:14; Ephesians 5:9

CHARACTER STUDY: Daniel (Daniel 6:1-23)

1. Which verses in Daniel 6 describe Daniel's uprightness of heart and life?
2. We learn goodness from the example of our Father as the scriptures are full of “the goodness of God.” David tells the Lord in Psalm 119:68, “You are good, and do good; teach me Your statutes.” What other scriptures can you find that tell us of the goodness of God?

APPLICATION:

- Daniel had a reputation of goodness among those who were unbelievers. How would others (in the world) describe you? Are you a Daniel?
- When we were children, we were often told to “be good.” What did our parents mean by that? They wanted us to do right, to behave in a way that was expected of us. Our heavenly Father is telling us the same, “Be good,” “Do what is right.” Uprightness of heart and life should be our state of being. It is who we are as followers of Christ. It is what our Father expects of His children. Do you have any “behavior issues” as a Christian? List any behavior in your life that you know is not up to the Father's expectations for you. Maybe you're not controlling your tongue. Maybe you're harboring envy in your heart. Whatever it is, look up scriptures that specifically address this problem and write them down. Read them often and pray for help in correcting this area of your life.

## Week #7 – FAITHFULNESS

Faithfulness - Greek word: *pistis* – trust, fidelity, confidence

Verses for memorization and meditation - Matthew 25:23; Luke 16:10; III John 5; Revelation 2:10

CHARACTER STUDY: Abraham (Genesis 22:1-18; Hebrews 11:17-19)

1. How did Abraham demonstrate his faithfulness to God? How was God faithful to Abraham?
2. Our deepest desire as a Christian is to hear the Lord say to us on the Day of Judgment, "Well done thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joys of thy Lord." What constitutes being a "faithful servant"?
3. One can appear to be faithful to the Lord by their proximity to Him (a regular "churchgoer"), but faithfulness is not determined by how often one is in the church building. Consider the apostle Judas. He was in the inner circle of Jesus. He heard Jesus preach and teach. He saw the miracles he performed, the compassion he exhibited. Yet, Judas was not a faithful servant. He was self-serving rather than God-serving.

APPLICATION:

- In what areas do you need to grow in faithfulness to God: Church attendance? Service to others? Prayer life? Study time? Teaching your children?...Focus on the area you need to work on the most and make a plan to put into practice. For example, maybe you need to work on teaching Bible in the home to your children. Choose a study you would like to do with the kids, and set a specific Bible time for each day. Make it a priority and let nothing interfere with it.
- Proverbs 31:10-11 talks about a virtuous wife being one that the heart of her husband can safely trust in. Can your husband safely trust in you in all things? What about others in your life (friends, children, family members, etc.) - do they consider you to be faithful, someone they can trust and count on implicitly? Trust is not something instilled overnight but built over time. If someone's trust in you has eroded, work on the process of rebuilding it. Start small if you need to. Learn to be a good listener. Keep confidences. Be open and honest, not hiding things or keeping secrets. Be dependable, keep your word.



## Week #8 – GENTLENESS

Gentleness - Greek word: *praute's* (prah-oo'-tace) – mildness, meekness

Verses for memorization and meditation - Matthew 11:29; Philippians 4:5; Titus 3:2; I Peter 3:3-4

CHARACTER STUDY: Paul (I Thessalonians 2:1-13)

1. How is the gentleness of Paul and his fellow missionaries described in this passage?
2. I have heard meekness defined as “power under control.” It is definitely not weakness but rather staying calm and practicing gentleness. Moses was described as a meek man (Numbers 12:3). What other Bible characters can you think of that practiced gentleness?

APPLICATION:

- Proverbs 16:32 says, “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” Do you rule your spirit well? Let's think about two bananas: Both are just ripening and have unspotted peels. One is picked up and poked and squeezed in several spots then laid down. The other is left untouched. The next day, both are peeled. The banana that was handled roughly will be bruised and smashed in places on the inside while the other banana will look unblemished. If you are having trouble ruling your spirit and practicing gentleness, keep a banana magnet on your frig or a small picture of bananas somewhere you will see it often. Let it remind you to handle people with gentleness to prevent bruising them inside.
- Practice gentleness in several ways: Speak softly and calmly. Feel compassion for others. Put yourself in someone's shoes. Give others the benefit of the doubt.

## Week #9 – SELF-CONTROL (TEMPERANCE)

Self-control - Greek word: *egkrateia* (eng-krat'-i-ah) – self-mastery, dominion within

Verses for memorization and meditation - Proverbs 25:28; Acts 24:25; Titus 2:2; James 1:19; II Peter 1:5-

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## CHARACTER STUDY: Joseph (Genesis 39:1-12)

1. When faced with any temptation, there are various ways of escape that we can take. We aren't at the mercy of the temptation. We do not have to give in, to indulge fleshly appetites, or our pride. It takes self-control, and Joseph shows us so well what that looks like. He was faced with the temptation of fornication – a young man all alone with a very willing woman. He showed great self-mastery as he tried to reason with her first, explaining how wrong it would be. But it reached the point that talking had to stop and literal escape had to start. He ran. He had dominion over his flesh by first having dominion within. He had already determined in his heart that he would not sin against God. What are some different ways of escape you use when faced with temptations?

2. Galatians 5:16-17 says, "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." Paul shares the key to practicing self-control and not fulfilling the lusts of our flesh – we must walk in the Spirit. What does it mean to "walk in the Spirit?"

### APPLICATION:

- When Paul preached to Felix in Acts 24, one of the subjects he touched on was that of self-control, and it made Felix tremble (Acts 24:25). Self-control was not a particular strong point of the decadent Romans, but if truth be told, it can be a difficult fruit for all of us to bear at times. What are some instances or areas in which you have trouble practicing self-control? List specific ways you can demonstrate self-control when confronted with these.
- To keep walking in the Spirit, practice a daily walking plan:
  - Walk humbly (Micah 6:8)
  - Walk in love (Ephesians 5:2)
  - Walk by faith (II Corinthians 5:7)
  - Walk in the light (I John 1:7)