

Th123 A Study of the Holy Spirit

Th123-30 Fruit of the Spirit

Believers sometimes debate, “Which is most needed in the Christian life—the gifts of the Spirit or the fruit of the Spirit?” This, however, is a pointless argument. The obvious answer is that both are necessary. True Christian witness involves both manifesting spiritual gifts and exhibiting spiritual fruit. As the gifts and fruit of the Spirit appear together in the Christian’s life, his or her witness to the world becomes greater. At the same time, the believer’s benefit to the church increases. In the last lesson, we discussed the nine gifts of the Spirit found in First Corinthians 12:8-10. In this lesson, we will look at the nine fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23.

Paul warned the Galatians about yielding to the “desires of the sinful nature.” He urged them to pursue the “fruit of the Spirit” instead. He wrote, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Gal 5:22-23). This fruit of the Spirit can be defined as *Christ-like qualities of character that are produced in believers as they live their lives under the Spirit’s influence*. They are Spirit-produced graces associated with godly attitudes, character, and lifestyle.

The fruit of the Spirit springs supernaturally from a life yielded to the Spirit of God. We should not confuse this spiritual fruit with mere human refinements, acquired through self-effort. On the contrary, spiritual fruit has its origin in the character of Christ, and it is formed as the Holy Spirit works in one’s life.

Like spiritual gifts, spiritual fruit serves to build up the body of Christ and to advance the kingdom of God in the earth. As believers grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, Christ’s character is reproduced in their lives. When people outside the church see these qualities in the Christian community, they are attracted to Christ. Then the church grows and God’s kingdom is advanced.

Like spiritual gifts, spiritual fruit is acquired by faith. Unlike spiritual gifts, however, spiritual fruit must be cultivated and grow in the Christian life. It is not manifested in full at the moment of faith, as are spiritual gifts, but grows gradually in the believer’s life as a result of his daily submitting to the Spirit and abiding in Christ.

Fruit of the Spirit in a believer’s life indicates that the person is attaining to maturity in Christ. Christian maturity is the quality of having the character and attitudes of Christ. Paul told the Philippian believers, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5). The nine fruit of the Spirit perfectly describe the attitudes of Christ. When these attitudes are present in a believer, we can say that he or she is a mature Christian. The presence of spiritual fruit in a believer’s life also indicates that one is truly a spiritual person. In the words of Paul, the person who is truly spiritual is the one who has “crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires,” is walking “in step with the Spirit,” and is displaying the fruit of the Spirit in his or her life (Gal 5:22-25).

How can a Christian ensure that the fruit of the Spirit is growing in their life? We must remember that spiritual fruit can only be cultivated by spiritual means. Spiritual fruit must therefore begin with spiritual experience. As one is born of the Spirit and filled with the Spirit, the seeds of spiritual fruit are planted in his or her life. For these seeds to grow and produce a harvest, the soil must then be cultivated. Such growth in grace can be cultivated in at least three ways.

First, spiritual fruit can be cultivated *by walking in the Spirit*. As we walk in the Spirit, and live our lives under the Spirit's guidance, spiritual fruit is produced and matures in our lives. Walking in the Spirit includes refusing to gratify the desires of the sinful nature, setting one's mind on what the Spirit desires, being controlled by the Spirit, putting to death the works of the flesh, and being led by the Spirit (Rom 8:5-14).

Second, spiritual fruit can be cultivated *by abiding in Christ*. Jesus taught that as we abide, or remain, in Him, spiritual fruit is produced in our lives. He described himself as the main stem of the vine, and us as the branches. If a branch is severed from the vine, it will die. If it abides in the vine, however, it will live and produce fruit. The same is true of us. If we remain in Christ, we will produce fruit. If we detach ourselves, we will die. "No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine" (John 15:4).

Third, spiritual fruit can be cultivated *by attending to the 'means of grace.'* By 'means of grace,' we refer to those spiritual disciplines that cause a believer to mature and grow in grace. Spiritual disciplines include, among other things, prayer and worship, fellowship with other Christians, Bible study, and meditation.

Both spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit are necessary elements of the Christian life. If we, as God's missionary people, are to fully represent Him to the world, we must exhibit both in abundance. As unbelievers see spiritual gifts in operation in the church, they are brought face to face with Christ's awesome power. As they see the fruit manifested in Christians, they are made to see His beautiful character. If the world is ever to truly see Christ in His church, we must earnestly desire both spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit in our lives and ministries.

This lesson is **important** because in it we have learned about the fruit of the Spirit and how it may be cultivated in the lives of believers.

The **main truth** we learn from this lesson is that we must walk in the Spirit, abide in Christ, and give diligence to spiritual disciplines in order to cultivate spiritual fruit in our lives.

Let's **review** some important truths we have learned from this lesson:

1. Define the fruit of the Spirit.

A. [PAUSE] If you answered that the fruit of the Spirit is *Christ-like qualities of character that are produced in believers as they live their lives under the Spirit's influence*, you are right.

2. List the nine fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23.
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered, “The nine fruit of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control,” you are correct.
3. Name three ways a Christian may cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in his or her life.
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that a Christian may cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in his or her life by walking in the Spirit, abiding in Christ, and practicing spiritual disciplines, you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is pray and ask the Spirit to fill you and begin producing the fruit of the Spirit in your life and ministry. Then begin diligently practicing the spiritual disciplines of prayer and worship, fellowship with other Christians, Bible study, and meditation. You should further teach these powerful truths to others.

Memorize and meditate on these words of Jesus from the Bible: “No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me ... apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:4-5).