

DEVELOPING THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

PRODUCE

DEL WELLS

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Produce: Developing the Fruit of the Spirit

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FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

LESSON 1 - INTRODUCTION

“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

The moment you confess Jesus Christ as Lord of your life, some significant changes happen to you. You are adopted into God’s spiritual family and given access to the benefits your new relationship brings. The Holy Spirit comes into your life to help you live each day to the full. As a creation in Christ, you must learn to be like Jesus in your thoughts, words, and actions.

Jesus sets the standard for you to aspire to. He is the example for you to follow. The more you know about Christ through studying the Bible, prayer, and Holy Spirit insight, the more you recognize your favoured position and privilege to become spiritually mature and complete.

Q1 – What are your initial thoughts about changing to become like Jesus?

Obviously, you can never be perfect in your character and conduct like Jesus because he is God and never sinned. However, you can mature more each day so that you resemble Christ wherever you are and whoever you interact with. Becoming like Jesus enables you to experience the full and productive life God has prepared for you.

So, how can you grow and mature spiritually each day? It requires more than your determined effort which is necessary. You need supernatural assistance to see God’s work taking shape in you. Always remember the Holy Spirit lives in you as a believer in Christ which means the seeds of godliness are there as well. The Spirit is ready to grow and maximize his spiritual fruit in you as you allow him to fill you with his presence to do his transformational work.

Q2 – How is Holy Spirit transformation both a relief and a challenge for you?

Look at the nine attributes listed in Galatians 5:22,23. The apostle Paul calls these the fruit of the Spirit. By using the singular ‘fruit’ he stresses the importance of having all the virtues growing in your life as opposed to only one or some of them. Spiritual fruit is external evidence of your inner maturity and vitality.

Each segment of fruit on its own is amazing to experience, both as an individual and for your relationships. For example, the fruit of supernatural love enhances your sense of personal well being and contributes to your interaction with others. Therefore, having all the fruit growing in

you brings personal wholeness and maturity and demonstrates the character of Jesus to others you are in contact with.

*Q3 – Which of these attributes in you need the most growth currently?
(Love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control)*

Paul states that “against such things there is no law”. That means there are no restrictions for demonstrating any of these virtues, anywhere or anytime. No one can stop you from thinking and acting maturely even if they ever try to. What you do is up to you.

Even from a humanistic perspective, the elements of the fruit of the Spirit are what most people would say are necessary for the betterment of societies everywhere. Who then would try to ban attitudes and behaviours that have a positive effect on mankind? Perhaps someone with authoritarian power might attempt to, but even they cannot prevent someone from choosing to exhibit moral excellence despite their threats.

Consider the positive effect you can have on the people you interact with when you do everything with a Christ-like perspective. Others see you as an example they can follow in stark contrast to the worldly models they are accustomed to. Not only do you personally live well following God’s way, but you also show others what is possible for them when they choose to experience by learning to live like Jesus.

Course Objectives

In this study of the Fruit of the Spirit, each lesson examines a segment of the fruit. We use the Bible to define what each virtue is, see how spiritual fruit should look in your life, and consider ways to promote their growth to produce spiritual maturity in you.

Q4 – Write out what do you hope to gain by taking this course.

After completing this study, come back here and assess how successful you were.

Benefits of the Fruit of the Spirit

1. Spiritual Fruit Builds Christ-Like Character in You

Character can be defined as the qualities of a life that make a positive impact on oneself and others. Some of these admirable traits are integrity, credibility, authenticity, trustworthiness,

reliability, consistency, grace, and generosity. People who demonstrate these characteristics are the backbone of a just and moral society. Determine to be one of them.

The more you emulate Jesus, the less regrets you have about what you could or should have done differently. Doing the right thing first is a time and energy saver that eliminates the need for you to engage in constant 'do-overs'. As a person of godly character, you are someone that others depend on and respect. That should encourage you to keep growing spiritually and maximize your relationships with others to influence them to be godly.

Always remember to develop these desirable attributes in partnership with the Holy Spirit. You cooperate with the Spirit by inviting him daily to work in you to progressively transform you into a person of Christlike character.

Q5 – Why is having Christ-like character important to you?

2. Spiritual Fruit Measures Your Spiritual Maturity

As a follower of Christ, you must choose to grow up in your faith and become a spiritual adult. When you are reborn into God's kingdom, you begin your new life as a spiritual baby. You are not to remain that way but must take the steps towards becoming spiritually mature to function proficiently in daily living and kingdom service.

Maturity is facilitated by the Holy Spirit in you. He prepares and equips you to do the right things at the right times in the right way. He broadens your perspective about everything, so you see things more like Jesus does. Ongoing transformation encourages you to be more patient about the maturing process and to persevere for the long term.

Be careful not to use natural abilities, talents, charisma, or gifts to measure one's spiritual maturity, including your own. It is possible to possess any of these advantages and still be immature. Maturity is acting like an adult even when others are being childish. That will be the result of the Holy Spirit producing spiritual fruit in you by surrendering to him willingly.

Q6 – Why is being spiritually mature important to you?

3. Spiritual Fruit Replaces Your Sinful Attitudes and Actions with Godly Ones

Lesson 4 in the *Life in the Spirit* course takes a close look at the life transformation process activated in you by learning to keep in step with the Holy Spirit as taught in Galatians 5:13-26. The outline of that teaching is provided on the on the next page for your convenience. The Scripture passage describes the conflict within you between the desires of your sinful nature and the Holy Spirit's. Your fleshly appetites are very powerful and tempt you to do what you do

not want to. By giving into your sinful nature, you rob yourself of God's blessings and disqualify yourself from belonging to God's kingdom.

Obviously, as a follower of Christ, you want to be like Jesus in your thoughts, words, and actions. To do that, you determine to be godly and willingly give up pursuing things that do not please God. That lifestyle choice requires you learning to keep in step with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables you to resist giving into sinful desires when you ask him to fill you with his presence daily. Instead of being known for bad behaviour and character, the godly traits produced in you build you a reputation of Christlikeness.

Q7 – Why is being godly and resisting sinful desires important to you?

Growing Spiritual Fruit Requires Making Good Choices

No one can grow godly attributes fully through human willpower. To see them maximized in your life you need supernatural help that you have full access to as a follower of Christ. The Holy Spirit in you is confirmation of your position and potential in Christ. To mature, you must cooperate with the Spirit who facilitates your spiritual growth as you choose to do what he wants over what you want every time.

Galatians 5:13-26 outlines the daily choices you must make to mature:

1. Choose to be free from slavery to sin and the law by serving others.
"You, my brothers and sisters, 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
 - Your freedom in Christ came at a great cost to God.
 - Do not waste your freedom by being enslaved to sin or legalism.
 - Use your freedom to humbly serve others lovingly.
2. Choose to live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit daily.
"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh...Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." Galatians 5:16,24
 - Your sinful nature does not disappear as a believer and continues to exert itself daily.
 - Overcoming sinful desires requires much more than your will power.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to keep you full of his presence and power and you will be enabled to not give in to your fleshly desires.
3. Choose to follow the Holy Spirit's leading.
"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law...Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." Galatians 5:18,25
 - You require divine direction daily to know how to live God's way.

- The Holy Spirit is prepared to guide you every step you take.
 - Learn to discern the different ways the Spirit communicates with you.
4. Choose to experience kingdom living by overcoming sinful desires.
“The acts of the flesh are obvious...those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Galatians 5:19,21
- Be born again to be able to enter and understand God’s kingdom (John 3:3,5).
 - Develop a distaste for sin by constantly thinking about God’s best (Philippians 4:8).
 - Learn to live as a citizen of God’s kingdom in all things (Matthew 6:33).
5. Choose to ask the Holy Spirit to produce his fruit in you daily.
“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Galatians 5:22,23
- Study Jesus in the Bible and learn how he thinks and acts.
 - Make Jesus the person you want to become like.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to maximize the fruit of the Spirit in you daily to be Christlike.

Q8 – How does it help to know what you must do to grow spiritual fruit?

Summary Thoughts

Godly character is evidence that you are in Christ. When you are connected to Jesus by your faith in him and obedience to his teaching, you grow to be more like him. The Holy Spirit produces Christlike qualities in you like a healthy tree produces good fruit.

On your own, you would live by your natural sinful desires that are detrimental to you and your relationships with others. But you are not on your own. The Holy Spirit enables you to live God’s way which enhances your life and blesses those you interact with.

Q9 – Why is it encouraging to see the character qualities as fruit to be grown with the Holy Spirit rather than virtues you to try to improve by yourself?

If you put the onus on yourself to develop more love, peace, joy, self-control, etc., you will be overwhelmed by your inadequacy to sustain even marginal improvement in any of these virtues, let alone all of them.

However, if you cooperate with the Holy Spirit by giving him permission to develop these attributes in you daily, you will experience ongoing spiritual growth of character. The Holy Spirit is unlimited in his ability to maximize every godly characteristic you need to live well and be godly. As you work your way through this study, keep the fruit-growing perspective in mind.

Every element of the fruit of the Spirit is already in you ready to be matured so stay Spirit-filled and keep growing.

YOUR RESPONSE

- ❖ Action item: Write out the list of the fruit of the Spirit.
 - Which of these attributes are evident in you and which ones aren't so much?
 - Why do you think that is?
 - What are you prepared to do about it?

- ❖ Action item: Ask the Holy Spirit to grow all the fruit in you every day.

- ❖ Action item: Commit yourself to living in the Spirit's fullness and stay surrendered to him.

LESSON 2 – LOVE

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love...” Galatians 5:22

The first element of Christ-like character listed is love. That shows its importance in relation to all the other qualities. Without love, anything you do will have little lasting value. Love must motivate and guide you in every aspect of life.

The Bible teaches extensively about love. You discover God’s perfect and extravagant love for his creation, love that Christ followers express to God, love you show to your neighbours, love believers express to each other, love family members have for each other, and love for your enemies. Love is a deep and complex quality with multiple layers and applications.

Have you ever wondered about what real love is? Everyone does at some point. What constitutes love? How do you get it? How do you get more of it? Is love a feeling or an act of the will? Are the world’s definitions of love different from God’s? Why are so many people searching for love in all the wrong places? As you can see, there are lots of questions about love that the Bible does have the answers to.

Q1 – How would someone typically define love and why do they think that?

God’s Love Is Already in You

Do you remember from Lesson 1 that love is a fruit of the Spirit? That means God’s perfect love is already in you because you are a follower of Christ. The Holy Spirit in you possesses love in fullness and expresses it through you as you allow him to produce it. The seed of God’s love is ready to grow in you as it is nurtured and cultivated by your cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

Q2 – How is it advantageous for God’s love to be in you already?

The World’s Love and God’s Love Defined

Compare the world’s definitions of love to God’s. See if you can recognize the differences between them and decide which kind of love you want for your life.

The world’s love:

- A profoundly tender, passionate affection towards another person.
- A feeling of warm, personal attachment.

- Sexual passion or desire.
- A strong liking for someone especially when mutually beneficial.

Q3 – What theme do you notice in these definitions?

Q4 – Give an example of how this love is portrayed to us by the world.

Q5 – What are some obvious shortcomings of feelings-based love like this?

As a human, you have been created by God with the ability to love and be loved. You naturally seek out ways to satisfy your need for love. When you exclude God from your search, you are left with imperfect substitutes for God's love that will always disappoint over time.

The greatest flaw in the world's approach to experiencing love is its focus on self. Love is presented as something you first need to feel better about yourself so you can love others. That is why it is rare for people to consider others before themselves, although it does sometimes happen. People are mostly focused on their own interests which includes receiving love from others as they picture it.

Q6 – What are things the world gets wrong about how to discover real love?

God's love:

The NT Greek word 'agape' is used most often in the Bible to describe God's love.

- Sacrificing self for the sake of another.
- Commitment to benefit others regardless of their response.
- Conscious, deliberate choosing to give to others without a guarantee of receiving anything in return.

Q7 – What theme do you notice in these definitions?

Q8 – Give an example of God showing this love to others.

Q9 – What are some benefits of unselfish giving to others?

Q10 - Write down what the following Scriptures say about God's love:

1 John 3:1

1 John 4:7

1 John 4:8
1 John 4:16
1 John 4:19
John 3:16
Romans 5:8
Romans 8:37-39

GOD IS LOVE

The source of true love is God. Experiencing perfect love is only possible by knowing God.

Q11 - Read 1 John 4:7-21. List your insights about the sure way to experience genuine love.

‘God is love’ means that he possesses and demonstrates love perfectly. Every attribute of God is rooted in love so that love is always his motivation for everything he does. Even his actions like judging and disciplining are done with a loving heart. God always has your best interests in mind and treats you accordingly.

The love of God is not just shown to you by him but is also given to you as a gift to use. When you are born again by confessing your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, the Holy Spirit comes inside of you. He perfectly possesses the love of God along with all other of the divine attributes. Therefore, God’s love has already been given to you in him, ready to be developed and utilized.

God’s Power and Love Are Connected

How do you increase God’s love in your life? It is not a matter of trying harder to love in your own strength but rather being open to the Holy Spirit to work in and through you. You already have what you need because God’s unlimited, perfect love is already in you: *“God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” Romans 5:5b.*

Ask the Holy Spirit to release his love through you continually and he will. The Spirit will empower you to love God and others like Jesus does. The more you allow the Spirit to fill you with his presence, the greater understanding of God’s love you will have. This will give you assurance of being God’s child and will expand your capacity to love others more deeply.

*Q12 - Read the following Scripture. Note that the Holy Spirit maximizes power and love in you.
“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with*

power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 3:14-19

Q13 – What is your role in the release of God's power and love in you?

The Priority of Active Love

Jesus identifies loving God and loving others as the two greatest commands to obey:

“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind’. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:37-40

Your number one priority in life is to love God completely. How do you do that? With the love of God already in you by the Holy Spirit. Everything you do flows out of your love for God. God's perfect love is sacrificial in nature so you will be motivated to surrender everything you are and have to God in response to his love to you.

Loving God first will enable you to love others the way you should. The more you express your love to God the greater your love for people grows. Obeying the second greatest command is essentially loving your neighbour the way you are already loved by God.

Q14 – Give an example of someone loving God totally.

Q15 – Give an example of loving your neighbour as God loves you.

Are You Growing in Love?

A good way to measure your growth in love is to read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a slowly. It contains a well-known description of Biblical love. The second time you read it, replace the words 'love' and 'it' with your name. This will cause you to think about how well you are progressing in each Christ-like aspect of love.

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, 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.”

Q16 - How are you doing overall in these expressions of love?

Q17 - What aspects of love have you seen growing in you?

Q18 - What areas of love need to grow more in you?

YOUR RESPONSE

- ❖ Action item: Summarize what you have learned in the first two lessons about growing spiritual fruit in you.
- ❖ Action item: Implement practices that will promote the fruit of love to mature in you. (i.e. stay Spirit-filled / serve others regularly / give to God’s work generously)
- ❖ Action item: Schedule regular appointments with yourself to measure your progress in growing the fruit of the Spirit including love (i.e. monthly).

LESSON 3 – JOY

“But the fruit of the Spirit is...joy.” Galatians 5:22

Happiness is often confused with joy. They are not the same thing.

Happiness is being in a state of pleasure or exhilaration that is usually the result of experiencing good fortune. You feel happy when you get a pleasant surprise and when things go your way. And when outcomes are not what you want, you become unhappy. Your moods are dictated by your emotions which can go up and down like a roller-coaster.

Joy is different. It is a deep sense of well-being that does not depend on how you feel about any situation. Joy is rooted in your relationship with God, so you have confidence that everything is under his control. Joy is not an emotion per se, but a fruit of the Spirit that is unaffected by circumstances. You can be unhappy with a situation and full of joy at the same time.

Q1 – Why is it important to differentiate between joy and happiness?

It is not wrong to be happy and feel exhilarated when experiencing pleasant moments. Small pleasures can bring a smile to your face as can times of celebration. Good memories are made this way. At the same time, there will be many occasions that will not be a lot of fun for you and will make you feel unhappy. Life is full of emotional ups and downs, but you can have joy in all of it as a mature follower of Christ.

How spiritually mature are you? If you are exhibiting all the fruit of the Spirit to some measure, you are clearly growing your godly character. If you are lacking in one or more of the elements, you need to take the necessary steps to get them growing. For example, if you experience little, if any, joy when things get challenging, you have some maturing to do.

Q2 – Why is joy a good indicator of your spiritual maturity?

Your level of maturity is revealed when you go through tough times. While it can appear that you are doing okay when things are relatively smooth, the pressure exerted upon you during reversals brings out into the open what is really going on inside of you. Thus, if you demonstrate real joy during challenges, you know that you are maturing spiritually. If you do not, then you realize that you need to grow more joy. This evaluation exercise is useful for assessing all the elements of your Christlike character. Do you exhibit peace, patience, self-control, and the rest of the fruit when push comes to shove? How much you do indicates the level of your progress in spiritual maturity.

God Is the Source of Your Joy

The Bible has a lot to say about joy. It is worth your while to do a word study in Scripture related to joy and learn about who has it and why.

Q3 - What do these examples from Psalms teach about joy:

Psalm 5:11,12

Psalm 16:11

Psalm 19:8

Psalm 28:7

Psalm 30:11,12

Psalm 43:4

Psalm 94:19

Psalm 119:111

Psalm 126:5,6

God is the source of your joy. Because joy is a quality produced by the Holy Spirit, it can be experienced in every situation.

Remember that the seed of joy is already in you as a follower of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Your relationship with God is the key to acquiring everything you need to live well and be godly (2 Peter 1:3,4). That includes the joy of the Lord that will sustain you through every situation you face. Constantly ask and allow the Holy Spirit to produce his perfect joy in you.

Q4 – What things do you do to know God more deeply and experience joy as a result?

God Uses Relationships to Mature Your Joy

You have two essential relationship focuses in your life. The primary one is with God and the other is with people. Experiencing joy is connected to both. It is possible to experience joy by yourself as the result of your intimacy with God. The greater your awareness of God being in you and of God blessing you connecting with him, the more your joy increases.

Pure joy is a God quality that is present where God is. Therefore, the fuller you are of the Holy Spirit, the greater your supply of joy will be. At the same time, your relationship with others is another means God uses to increase and mature your joy. Both relationships are vital for growing the fruit of joy in you. The following section looks at how joy is maximized in you through your close interactions with God and others.

Joy Is Produced in You Through Your Relationship with God

i. Godly Joy Begins with Your Salvation

“The jailer...was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God – he and his whole household.” Acts 16:34

The moment you confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, the Holy Spirit comes in you as a confirmation of your new spiritual birth. Perfect joy resides in the Spirit and for the first time you experience indescribable, divine joy through him.

The Philippian jailer was filled with joy, not only because of his salvation but also because his entire family believed and were saved. Rejoicing is promoted and perpetuated by experiencing the joy of salvation. This is the case in heaven where God and his angels abide: “...there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Luke 15:10 (Also see Luke 15:7).

Q5 – Describe how your salvation initially and continually promotes joy in you.

ii. Godly Joy Is Matured Through Obedience to Christ’s Commands

“If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” John 15:10,11

This Scripture amplifies what you have been learning about how joy forms and expands in your life. Love, the first segment of the fruit of the Spirit (Lesson 2), is solidified by obeying Jesus’ commands. You already know that the seeds of all the fruit in you are cultivated by studying and putting into practice Jesus’ teaching. That includes your joy stimulated by your love.

This is not about self-manufactured joy that you have to work up. This is Jesus’ joy that is given to you to be fully developed. Jesus says that his joy is complete, not lacking in quality or amount. Any disciple of Jesus can experience complete joy by obeying Christ’s commands to remain in his love.

Do you recognize the importance of knowing what Jesus expects and then doing it? If so, you are already experiencing the joy that obedience to Christ brings. Keep doing that and you will continue to maximize your joy.

If you have not established knowing and practicing Jesus’ commands, you are missing a foundation for your life that is rock solid and will sustain you through the storms you face (Matthew 7:24-27 / Luke 6:46-49). Keep in mind that the Holy Spirit is ready to enable you to grow spiritually as you put into practice Jesus’ teachings.

To assist you in implementing obedience to Christ into daily living, refer to the course *Commands of Christ* which identifies the commands and how to obey them.

Q6 – Explain how you make obeying Christ’s commands a priority in your life.

iii. Godly Joy Increases Through Kingdom Service

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.” Romans 14:17,18

Serving Christ in his kingdom requires you to depend on God to enable you supernaturally. By stretching yourself beyond your natural abilities and preferences to represent Jesus in whatever you do, you open yourself up to the Holy Spirit filling you with the divine resources needed. As the Spirit’s presence increases in you, the greater your potential for spiritual growth becomes. That includes producing spiritual fruit like joy.

A good example of this is when the seventy-two returned to Jesus after he sent them out to do kingdom ministry. The overflow of joy in all of them was evident: “The seventy-two returned with joy and said, ‘Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.’” Luke 10:17

Another example is the obvious joy in a group of disciples enduring opposition for their kingdom service. Rather than exhibiting fear and disappointment from the persecution of Paul and Barnabas, “the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” Acts 13:52. The Spirit produced abundant joy in these Christ followers who were faithfully doing kingdom service.

Q7 – Give a personal example of experiencing joy doing challenging kingdom ministry.

iv. Godly Joy Maximizes Through Faith-Filled Prayer

“Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” John 16:24

Answered prayer is a catalyst for increasing your joy according to Jesus. The Holy Spirit does this as you surrender yourself to him and are filled with supernatural power. The Spirit both assists you in praying according to God’s will and produces his fruit of joy in you.

It is easy to overlook the importance of going to Jesus and asking him to do what only he can. Failing to pray for any reason prevents you from experiencing joy in full measure or ‘complete joy’ as Jesus calls it. You must learn to pray about everything, believing that the Lord is able to do anything and will do it according to his perfect knowledge and will.

Every time you recognize God answered your prayer his way, remember to acknowledge that to him with thanks. This exercise will increase the joy the Holy Spirit is growing in you. David is a good example of trusting God with his needs, thanking and praising him, and experiencing great joy in return: "Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him." Psalm 28:6,7.

Q8 – How do you learn to pray in Jesus' name, according to his will?

Q9 – How do you know that God has answered your prayers?

Q10 – How do you remember to thank God when you experience his joy?

These four undertakings (salvation, obedience, service, and prayer) promote the development of joy in you. They all involve your relationship with God. Your highest priority in everything is knowing God personally and intimately. The closer you become with God, the greater your joy will be. God also develops joy in you through your relationships with others. Connecting with people further increases your joy which is the focus of the next section.

Joy Is Produced in You Through Your Relationship with Others

Most people recognize that healthy relationships bring a sense of satisfaction to our lives beyond what we experience by ourselves. Your family, friends, church family, and other acquaintances contribute to your well-being when these relationships are working well. The apostle Paul understood that his connection with other people contributed to maturing his joy. Next to his relationship with Jesus, who he considered his greatest joy, the people he shared his life with were also a joy to him.

Think about how Paul's relationships produced joy in the following Scriptures:

- "In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now..." Philippians 1:4,5

- "...I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith..." Philippians 1:25b

- "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown..." Philippians 4:1a

- "Indeed, you are our glory and joy." 1 Thessalonians 2:20

- “How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?” 1 Thessalonians 3:9

- “...I long to see you (Timothy), so that I may be filled with joy.” 2 Timothy 1:4b

- “Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother (Philemon), have refreshed the hearts of the Lord’s people.” Philemon 7

The apostle John also understood the link between relationships and joy: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” 3 John 4

Q11 – What different types of relationships are noted in these Scriptures?

Q12 – Why would you agree that spiritual partnerships can maximize joy?

Q13 – What role does the Holy Spirit play in producing deep joy in you?

Your intentional actions of deepening your relationships with God and others stimulate the growth of spiritual fruit in you like joy.

YOUR RESPONSE

- ❖ Action item: Assess your relationship with God and how much joy it brings you.
What are things you can do to increase your level of joy based on the four ways to produce joy noted above (salvation, obedience, service, prayer)?

- ❖ Action item: Assess your relationships with others.
 - a) Which ones bring joy and which ones do not?

 - b) What are ways you can enhance your healthy relationships that add joy?

 - c) How can you address your relationships that do not produce joy?

- ❖ Action item: Ask the Holy Spirit to supernaturally increase your joy through the relationships you have with God and others.

- ❖ Action item: Invite the Holy Spirit to fill you with his presence and power daily to continue his work in you in every area of life.

LESSON 4 – PEACE

“But the fruit of the Spirit is...peace.” Galatians 5:22

Have you ever thought about exhibiting peace being a character trait? Do you realize that your demonstration of peace is an indicator of your level of spiritual maturity? Like the other eight elements, peace is spiritual fruit already in you that the Holy Spirit can grow as you cooperate with him. Too often peace is treated like a commodity to ask for during tense times rather than a spiritual attribute that is always present. That means the more spiritually mature you become, the more pronounced your godly character traits will be. Peace and the other fruit will be ready to utilize whenever needed.

Q1 – How does thinking of peace as fruit of the Spirit that can grow challenge your current ideas about having peace?

God’s Peace Is Unique

When people talk about peace, what do they have in mind? You hear about the need for world peace which means the cessation of wars. There is also the idea of personal peace being the reduction of the busyness and noise of the daily grind of trying to accomplish and accumulate more. And then there is the concept of peace as the solution for relational conflicts that are tearing families and friends apart that need to de-escalate and calm down.

These all describe real-life situations requiring people to get along with others for the greater good and find remedies that everyone will agree with. Unfortunately, selfish motives are often in play by one or all parties involved, and peace is rarely achieved between them and only for a short time when it is.

God’s peace is different than any other. It is spiritual in nature, and it transforms the hearts of people first before addressing situations and relationships. This peace is produced by God, not people, and has an unlimited supply. Supernatural peace is a state of being, not simply a temporary infusion of calmness at specific times. God offers his peace to anyone who wants it enough to ask and receive it from him.

Q2 – How does knowing God affect your potential for experiencing peace?

The Bible Describes God's Peace

Read and reflect on the different dimensions of God's peace in the following Scriptures:

- Quietness of heart and mind to feel safe in any circumstance
"In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety."
Psalm 4:8
- Absence of inner conflict that promotes overall well-being
"A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones." Proverbs 14:30
- Calmness, clarity, and confidence in any situation that defies human logic
"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7
- Ability to make sound decisions that facilitate peace with others
"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace." Colossians 3:15
- Absence of fear
"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14:27

Q3 – How is God's peace superior to what people think peace is?

God's Peace Grows in You Through the Holy Spirit

Experiencing inner peace always is possible by living a Spirit-filled life. The Holy Spirit possesses perfect peace in unlimited supply. Your responsibility is to cooperate with the Spirit by staying fully surrendered to him and inviting him to maximize all his fruit in you.

The following Scriptures give some of the evidence that you are growing in God's peace:

- A healthy and stable mind
"The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace." Romans 8:6
- A kingdom focus about everything
"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Romans 14:17

- A disciplined and productive life
“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:11
- Unshakable confidence in God
“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.” Isaiah 26:3

As you look at this list, you notice that you must choose to participate with God to experience supernatural peace. You give the Holy Spirit oversight of your life, you value kingdom priorities over personal pleasures, you train yourself to be godly, and you trust God to have you fully covered. God does his part when you do yours.

If you are not willing to choose God’s way over yours, you cannot expect to have the fruit of the Spirit growing in you, including peace. Obviously, an unbeliever does not have the potential to have real peace because the Holy Spirit is not in them. They do not have any inclination to pursue what they do not believe exists because they lack spiritual insight.

A believer is another story, however. To not experience indescribable peace is a matter of choice. The seeds of the fruit of peace are already in you, waiting to be nurtured and grown by the Holy Spirit. If you want peace, you must choose to surrender yourself to the ongoing transformative work of the Spirit and give full attention and effort to maturing spiritually.

Q4 – What is a practical thing you do to surrender to the Holy Spirit’s oversight?

Experiencing God’s Peace Is Beyond Amazing

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7

When you have God’s peace, you deal with life’s issues in a way that defies human logic. As stressful as the situation you are going through is, you feel calm, assured, and confident. You believe that the Holy Spirit has prepared you to face every circumstance with a clear mind and a fearless heart because you are ‘in Christ’. That means you are in a growing relationship with Jesus who provides you with everything you need always.

God’s peace is described as that “which transcends all understanding”. It is humanly impossible to grasp the magnificence of the peace that originates in God and is given to those who want it enough to receive it. You will be unable to comprehend and express in words God’s perfect peace in you because it is beyond even what you can imagine.

Notice in this Scripture that the peace of God is pictured as a guard set up to protect your heart and mind. Think about how strategic that is. When you are producing God's peace every day, your mind and heart are surrounded by an impenetrable barrier to block out any intrusion. That is how your mind remains clear and your heart is not anxious. Every untrue and unsettling thought is denied access to your inner parts, and you continue to focus on Christ, the author and perfecter of your faith.

Q5 – Describe a time when others noticed how peaceful you were when someone in your position would be falling apart.

Q6 – How is it helpful to view God's peace guarding your heart and mind?

Maximizing God's Peace in You

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God.” Philippians 4:6

Remember that the seeds of God's peace are already in you in the Holy Spirit ready to grow into mature fruit. That happens with your full cooperation. God is the one who makes spiritual things grow and he does that in partnership with willing participants (1 Corinthians 3:5-9). For spiritual fruit to mature in you, you must do your part as God has instructed in his Word.

Philippians 4:6 identifies practical actions that you must take to experience indescribable peace. The long-term payoff is more than worth every effort you make to obey God. As you read these required actions, think about how you are implementing them in your life.

1) “Do not be anxious about anything”

Most people worry, some more than others. Mental stress and physical discomfort are common signs of fearing that something negative may happen. Any of us can have moments of worry after receiving unsettling news. However, anxiety unattended will become debilitating. You must learn to be decisive and deal promptly with worry.

You are not helpless in prohibiting worrisome thoughts from taking root in you. As a Christ follower, you have something powerful to overcome worry – the peace of God. The Holy Spirit is prepared to help you neutralize your anxiety. The first step you must take is to trust God that he has everything fully under his control. Tell him that you trust him about that.

Worry never accomplishes anything positive. It has no effect on the ultimate outcomes of circumstances, but it does affect the quality of your life. You cannot worry and experience peace at the same time. So, as the Scripture clearly teaches, do not worry about a thing.

Q7 – How does the Holy Spirit’s presence help you to not worry?

2) “...but in every situation, by prayer and petition...present your request to God.”

Every situation means just that. There is no circumstance in your life that you should not include God. You must train yourself to stay connected to God prayerfully every moment and acknowledge your dependence on him for everything.

Prayer is essentially communicating with God. That includes both speaking to him about your needs and listening to him give you answers, direction, and assurance. The Holy Spirit will assist you in prayer whenever you ask him to.

Your ongoing prayerful attitude is essential for experiencing the full measure of God’s peace. Worry has no place to grow when you surrender every detail of your life to God.

Q8 – Give an example of what happened when you prayed instead of worrying.

3) “...with thanksgiving”

It does matter why you pray to God. If you do it as an obligation instead of a privilege, you will hinder your potential for peace. God does look into your heart, and he knows what you think about him regardless of what you say and how you act on the outside.

Your ability to pray is a gift from God. You have been given full access to God by his own choice and at his expense. In Christ, you have God’s attention and favour.

You must be genuinely thankful to God for his abundant grace given to you and treat him accordingly. Not having to worry about anything and being able to surrender everything to God confidently should make you the most grateful person alive. You should leave no doubt with God and others about how you feel about your access to God and his care for you.

Take note of how the Bible connects mature joy, intentional prayer, and expressive thanksgiving with doing God’s will: “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” 1Thessalonians 5:16-18.

Everything in your life is rooted in your relationship with Christ through faith. The NT describes in detail what being ‘in Christ’ gives you access to. You have been provided with everything you need to live well and be godly (2 Peter 1:3). You have the Holy Spirit to help you mature as a disciple of Christ and to obey everything you have been commanded. Knowing all that should prompt you to rejoice, pray, and give thanks to God continually.

Q9 – Describe how you incorporate thanks to God into your prayers.

YOUR RESPONSE

- ❖ Action item: Think about how you respond to unsettling news.
 - a) Do you worry beyond your initial reaction, or do you experience a sense of peace?

 - b) Why do you respond the way you do?

- ❖ Action item: Memorize Philippians 4:6,7.
Train yourself to quote this Scripture every time you are tempted to worry.

- ❖ Action item: Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with his presence and power so that you actively 'live by the Spirit'. (Galatians 5:16, 25).
Learn to speak to the Holy Spirit as your companion in every situation.

- ❖ Action item: Be thankful to God always for his ongoing involvement in your life.
Treat every circumstance as an opportunity to do God's will with thanksgiving.

LESSON 5 – FORBEARANCE

“But the fruit of the Spirit is...forbearance.” Galatians 5:22

If you are familiar with the fruit of the Spirit, you will notice that the term forbearance has replaced patience in the latest NIV Bible updated in 2011 used in this and all LT courses. The change is helpful because of what this fruit involves. While having or lacking patience personally is included, the concept of practicing patience with others is its major focus.

Forbearance means to refrain from doing something for the sake of another. It is practicing patient endurance with others beyond what is normally expected or required. The spiritual fruit of forbearance is the supernatural ability to put up with what is difficult to do.

We live in impatient times. People in our culture do not want to wait very long for anything. We are conditioned to be like this by hearing constant messages promoting our right to have what we want now. As a result, we are often frustrated when there is a delay to our preferred outcome, whether it is waiting in the checkout line at the grocery store, being stopped at a traffic light, or putting in time while a decision is being made that affects us.

Because people are not usually patient, someone displaying patience without complaining is noticed as exceptional behaviour. With that in mind, consider the potential for Christian witness by being extraordinarily patient in trying situations. That can create opportunities to be asked by others how you are able to remain calm which could then facilitate a conversation about how God enables you to do so. The fruit of the Spirit is evidence of Christ-like character. Practicing forbearance with others is an obvious trait of your spiritual maturity. People will see in your life what is possible with God’s help.

Q1 – Why is forbearance a good indicator of spiritual maturity?

Forbearance Is Vastly Underrated

Rather than society promoting entitlement and instant self-gratification, how would things be different if it promoted practicing patience with self and others instead? Some of the positive outcomes would be less anxiety and frustration with others, more personal peace and calmness, and greater tolerance of other people.

'Forbearance' is translated from the Greek word that means endurance. It pictures someone's long-suffering of people and circumstances, being slow to get angry or despair. Forbearance is showing restraint, overcoming the desire to react prematurely and immaturely.

A patient person intentionally curbs the urge to selfishly overreact to someone or something negatively. It is when a person provokes or frustrates you by failing to follow through on a promise made. It is your response to an unpleasant circumstance that causes you discomfort, delay, or unmet expectations. Regardless of the source of irritation, forbearance bears with whatever is faced with determined resolve and conspicuous grace.

Q2 – Give a personal example of losing your patience, why you did, and the outcome.

The Forbearance of God

All Christ-like character traits are displayed perfectly in God. The Bible gives a comprehensive teaching about God's divine attributes. As a follower of Christ, every virtue that you can exhibit has its origin in God's nature. In Christ, the Holy Spirit develops these attributes in you so that you resemble your Creator in your everyday world.

Forbearance is a good example. God shows how patient he is with people by delaying his final judgment so that everyone will accept his gift of eternal life even though most act uninterested: *"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance...Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation..." 2 Peter 3:9,15a*

How patient would you be with people disrespecting you repeatedly despite you constantly favouring them at great personal cost? Would you not be tempted to say enough is enough and give up on them? How long would you be able to endure their ingratitude and dishonour?

That is how mankind has treated God from the beginning. He has done everything for us and has offered eternal blessing to all at his own expense. What God asks in return is the acknowledgement that he is the Creator, and we are his creation who owe our very existence to him. Unfortunately, humankind keeps treating God with disrespect despite his grace.

This Scripture describes God's patience with humankind. He has every right and reason to end things and bring final judgment. Instead, God extends his period of grace-giving so that no one can say they did not have a chance to reach out to him. God does not want any person to perish and so he continues to be exceptionally patient. God gives anyone every opportunity to repent of selfish ways and turn around to live his way. Regarding the fruit of forbearance as a work of the Holy Spirit in us, it is supernatural long-suffering beyond our ability to exhibit, reflecting God's patience with us.

Q3 – How would becoming patient like God with others benefit your daily life?

The Holy Spirit Grows the Fruit of Forbearance in You

Remember that the seeds of the fruit of the Spirit are already in you waiting to be nurtured for growth. You have a part to play as to the amount of fruit you grow. The more you open yourself to the Holy Spirit's work, the more the Spirit does in you.

There are several key activities through which the Holy Spirit produces forbearance in you: suffering, discipling, empowering, and activating. All these experiences are opportunities for you to mature spiritually. Evaluate how you participate in each action.

1) Suffering

“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.” 1 Peter 4:12-16

“Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.” James 5:10,11

There is a tendency in our day for people who identify as Christians to try to avoid being labelled as a follower of Jesus and his teachings. Why is that? It is because the world is hostile to Christ and anyone who lives his way. There is a price to pay in our culture for being an open Christian believer. You can be subjected to verbal insults, unfair treatment, and persistent persecution. None of these assaults are pleasant to experience but these times of suffering for your faith are opportunities for spiritual growth.

Q4 – Why should you rejoice and not run away when persecuted for Christ?

Q5 – Why are not all reasons for suffering approved by the Holy Spirit?

Q6 – How do the prophets and Job encourage you to patiently persevere?

2) Disciplining

“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.” 2 Timothy 4:2

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16,17

Forbearance is necessary for you to become a fully formed follower of Christ. It takes time to learn what God’s Word teaches and apply it to your life. There are no shortcuts for growing from a spiritual child to an adult. You must be willing to be disciplined through discipline by those who are more seasoned in the faith so that you are equipped to disciple others.

The apostle Paul wrote the words above to Timothy, one of the people he disciplined. Timothy made himself accountable to Paul so that he could become a disciplined disciple-maker himself. Being committed to the discipling process long term requires patience to persevere, both for the teacher and the student. The Holy Spirit produces forbearance in us to do that.

Q7 – In what ways can the Bible be used for discipling as noted in the Scriptures above?

Q8 – Describe how being disciplined by the Word has facilitated your spiritual growth.

Q9 – What is the evidence of successful biblical discipling noted above?

3) Empowering

“...bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience...” Colossians 1:10b,11

Growing spiritual fruit in abundance is Christ’s expectation for all his followers (John 15:8). This course focuses on the fruit of the Spirit, the essential qualities of Christ-like character. John 15 explains the connection between fruit bearing and a deepening relationship with God. Notice in the Colossians verses above the spiritual fruit maximized by God’s empowering is “great endurance and patience”, essential elements of forbearance. The need to be continually full of the Holy Spirit’s presence and power cannot be over-emphasized. Allow the Spirit to have complete access to your life to produce spiritual fruit supernaturally.

Q10 – How do you intentionally involve the Holy Spirit in your spiritual growth?

Q11 – What evidence do you see of ‘great endurance and patience’ maturing in you?

Q12 – Describe what it is like for you staying empowered by the Holy Spirit.

4) Imitating

“We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.” Hebrews 6:12

In Christ, God has already given you everything you need to live well and be godly (2 Peter 1:3). The Holy Spirit in you possesses every quality you require to grow spiritually. However, it is up to you to access what God has made available to you and activate it. You must make the effort to do your part, believing that God will always do his (2 Peter 1:3-11).

Laziness is counterproductive for your spiritual growth. You must choose to participate in God’s transformative work in you every day. You must practice every day what you want to become proficient at. You have examples to follow who acted in faith, persevering in the power of the Holy Spirit with faith. You are expected to imitate Bible characters and those you know personally that are spiritually mature. Learn from them by reading the Word and interacting with those who are present. Determine to adopt their daily disciplines for staying the course and reaping the rewards of God’s blessings now and for eternity.

Q13 – What things have you found contribute to laziness? What can you do about that?

Q14 – Who are Biblical examples of spiritual maturity that you follow? Why them?

Q15 – Who are current spiritually mature people you imitate? Why them?

Summary

Growing spiritual fruit is not a passive activity. It requires your full effort in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. It is helpful to treat this as a blessing rather than a burden. The more you participate in this growth endeavour, the better your fruit will develop and increase. That includes the fruit of forbearance enabling you to persevere patiently through times of suffering, disciplining, empowering, and imitating.

YOUR RESPONSE

- ❖ Action item: Give your definition of forbearance that showcases perseverance.

- ❖ Action item: Describe how you participate in the following growth opportunities.
 - a) Suffering
 - b) Disciplining
 - c) Empowering
 - d) Imitating

- ❖ Action item: Take time to measure how much your patience is growing by comparing recent situations you have gone through with your past reactions.

- ❖ Action item: Ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to exhibit forbearance with people and situations that can be challenging.

LESSON 6 – KINDNESS

“But the fruit of the Spirit is...kindness.” Galatians 5:22

People being kind to others is not something you see a lot these days. It is so rare that organizations and campaigns have been established to motivate more people to occasionally do one act of kindness. People want to be treated kindly but have to be told to do it to others.

Kindness is defined as being helpful towards someone in need. The purest form of being kind is not to receive anything in return but solely for the needy person’s sake. That level of unselfish generosity is both impressive and challenging for any of us. It requires supernatural help to show kindness willingly with honest intentions.

The spiritual fruit of kindness is exactly what is needed. The Holy Spirit sows the kindness seed in you, nurtures it along, and grows it to maturity so you can activate it as required. You can tell you are growing in kindness when you treat others more like the Good Samaritan did than those who do not really care, including the religious types (Luke 10:30-37).

Q1 – Why are people often unkind towards others?

Q2 – What are some negative consequences of widespread unkindness?

Benefits of Kindness for You and Others

Even though kindness in its purest form is focused on the one receiving the gracious act, those who are kind gain huge benefits as well. A book titled ‘The Healing Power of Doing Good’ by Allan Luks, highlights research of numerous scientific studies reporting significant physical and mental health benefits from being kind.

A few of these benefits include a reduction of the effects of physical and psychological diseases and disorders, an improved sense of one’s well-being and optimism, and increased resilience and vigour for facing challenges in everyday living.

Kind people are generally healthier than those who are unkind. While this is not to be the primary motive for showing kindness, it does produce in the giver a disposition to bless others which is another benefit. As well, other people are positively impacted by your example of showing them that being kind is a great way to live.

God's Kindness on Display

As we have pointed out, every positive character trait you aspire to possess is perfectly displayed in God. Being godly is essentially living in a way that reflects God's nature. You have the Holy Spirit in you who possesses all these qualities perfectly and will develop them in you to become more like Christ. That includes showing kindness extravagantly as Jesus does. The following Scriptures highlight God's kindness on display.

"But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy." Titus 3:4,5a

"And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:6,7

"Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?" Romans 2:4

Q3 – From these Scriptures, write your thoughts about God's kindness to you through Christ.

In this sampling of Scriptures, you get a glimpse of how kind God is to you and others. Jesus coming to humankind to offer salvation from sin and give eternal life at his expense is the ultimate act of kindness. God does not use a spiritual sledgehammer to drive us into submission to him but overwhelms us with kindness so that we want what he wants and turn our lives to him willingly.

The Spiritual Fruit of Kindness

Throughout this course, we have highlighted the supernatural enabling of the Holy Spirit in us, transforming us daily to exhibit Christ-like character. That is important to keep in mind because it is unnatural for most people to be kind especially when being treated unkindly. What we need is for God to give us the ability to act like Jesus. He has done that already for every follower of Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Our capacity to be kinder increases the more the Spirit has our cooperation and willing participation.

Spiritual kindness is motivated by love ("Love is...kind" 1 Corinthians 13:4). Think about any relationship you have. Showing kindness expresses love practically and helps to strengthen the bonds between you both.

When offense occurs in a relationship, forgiveness is needed for reconciliation. Being able to forgive others is facilitated by being kind: *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”* Ephesians 4:32. Forgiving someone is being kind like Jesus who forgives our sins while we do not deserve it.

Q4 – Give an example of a relationship you are aware of that could be improved with kindness.

Any relationship will be stronger and deeper when each person treats the other one kindly, being ready to forgive with love. The so-called Golden Rule gives a simple way to apply kindness in any situation. Jesus teaches, *“Do to others as you would have them do to you.”* Luke 6:31. In every situation, treat other people the way you would want to be treated with kindness.

A familiar example of someone showing unexpected kindness is the Good Samaritan who Jesus talks about in Luke 10:25-37. This man did not hesitate to show mercy to someone in need even though few would have imagined he would. In a world of prejudice, rudeness, and self-centredness, the Samaritan stands out as a prototype of someone motivated by kindness.

Q5 – Give an example of what a good Samaritan might look like today.

Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan in response to the question about who your neighbour is as it relates to the second greatest commandment (Matthew 22:39). The answer is that you are a neighbour to anyone you show mercy to. You are the one who initiates kindness to others rather than waiting for others to be kind to you first.

Acting kindly is facilitated by thinking like Jesus. Doing good to others should be viewed as a privilege, not an obligation. You can tell you are maturing spiritually when your first impulse is to do what you can for someone. That indicates the Holy Spirit is working in you producing his fruit so that you respond like Jesus would.

Spiritual maturity is not accidental – it requires your full participation with God. You must put into practice what you are being taught in the Scriptures with the help of the Holy Spirit. You must focus your thoughts on Christ and desire to become more like him every day.

Colossians 3:1-17 gives practical teaching about godly living. Read these Scriptures and note what you must do for the Holy Spirit to maximize his work in you.

Q6 – What do the following actions look like for you?

- *“Set your hearts...minds on things above, not on earthly things”* Vs 1,2

- *“Put to death...whatever belongs to your earthly nature”* vs 5-11

- *"...clothe yourselves with...kindness..." vs 12-14*

- *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts..." v 15*

- *"Let the message of Christ dwell in your richly..." v16*

- *"...do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God..." v17*

YOUR RESPONSE

- ❖ Action item: Identify the situations you find hardest to be kind in and why that is.

- ❖ Action item: Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you afresh and bring kindness to life in you regardless of the situation, including the ones you listed above.

- ❖ Action item: Work your way through the required actions of Colossians 3:1-17 and ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to put them into practice.

LESSON 7 – GOODNESS

“But the fruit of the Spirit is...goodness.” Galatians 5:22

Goodness is a spiritual quality already in you that must be developed and activated for you to know God more deeply (2 Peter 1:5-9). Goodness is spiritual fruit that the Holy Spirit plants in you as seed at your conversion to be nurtured to grow continually.

Goodness is essentially moral excellence of character. Someone does good because they have the desire and ability to do so. Goodness is not the same as perfection in human beings. Only God is perfectly good which means everything he does is absolutely the right thing regardless of how it may seem to you. You learn about ideal goodness by knowing God.

Q1 - Check out these samples of God’s goodness and take note of its effect on you:

Exodus 33:19 – His goodness shown in mercy and compassion to you intentionally

Psalms 23:6 – His goodness with you wherever you are

Psalms 25:8-10 – His goodness instructs you in righteous living

Psalms 31:19 – His goodness stored up and bestowed for fearing God

Psalms 34:8-10 – His goodness provides you with everything you need

Psalms 52:9 – His goodness is reflected in his name that you hope in

Psalms 116:12 – His goodness goes beyond your ability to repay

Psalms 142:7 – His goodness to you encourages the righteous

Matthew 7:11 – His goodness gives generously to you by asking him

John 10:11,14,15 – His goodness sacrifices to benefit you

1 Peter 2:2,3 – His goodness motivates you to grow up spiritually

These Scriptures are a sampling of God’s goodness towards you. The Bible contains hundreds of references that describe God as the ideal of being good. Take time to study more of these verses and you will increase your understanding and appreciation of how good God really is in all his ways to you and everyone.

You are Called to Grow in Goodness

God's own goodness calls us to become more like him in our thoughts and actions by growing in godliness (see 2 Peter 1:3,5,6). Check out the 'Everything You Need' course that explains this concept in detail. God offers you the opportunity to live well and be godly, not because you deserve it, but because God is good and generously provides for those who know him.

You need to know what it means to be good and how to do it. Jesus is your example of reflecting God's character through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus deliberately set aside his divine advantages and lived as a human being dependent on the Holy Spirit showing that you can do likewise: *"how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him."* Acts 10:38.

Study the life of Jesus on earth and learn how he lived so that you can follow his example. While you can never be perfectly good like Jesus was, you can grow your goodness by surrendering yourself to the work of the Holy Spirit like Jesus did.

Q2 – How does Jesus' example influence your openness to the Holy Spirit?

Goodness Explained

The Greek word translated as goodness connotes attitudes and actions directed by uprightness of heart. The good person desires to benefit others, not to be recognized or applauded, but because it is their nature to do so. Doing good is not what makes someone good. People do good because they are growing the fruit of goodness.

Jesus teaches that it is what is inside a person that influences their actions: *"Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit...how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him."* Matthew 12:33-35

Q3 – Why are we surprised when nice people do bad things? Is nice the same as good?

What is inside of you will always find its way out eventually. You react the way you do according to the condition of your spiritual heart. Do not make excuses when you say and do things that you regret. Instead, go back to basics and get your heart healthy so that you will naturally act good because you have a good heart. Then you will have no regrets to make excuses for because you did what is right.

Good Versus Evil

“Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.” 3 John 11

It is important to train yourself to know the difference between good and evil. The Bible and the Holy Spirit will teach you how when you apply yourself to learning. You also need to choose good examples to follow that influence you to make godly choices. These must be your daily disciplines because you are naturally inclined to be and do evil.

The apostle Paul was clear about the sinful nature of every person: *“For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing.” Romans 7:18,19.* You sense Paul’s frustration with the powerful influence of his sinful nature. He often does the opposite of what he should or should not do.

People are not fundamentally good by nature as many believe: *“God looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. Everyone has turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.” Psalm 53:2,3.*

The way to change bad behaviour is not thinking that you are basically a good person but admitting that you are fundamentally corrupt. You are driven by your sinful desires to do evil instead of good. People sin because they are sinners who do what comes naturally to them. Every person needs God to transform their heart with new desires and power to do good.

Q4 – Why is it liberating to acknowledge your inherent sin nature to do evil?

Light (Godliness) Dispels Darkness (Evil)

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.” Ephesians 5:8-11

Living as God’s light is a daily choice. It means acting like a child of God by demonstrating godly qualities like goodness, righteousness, and truth. Take the time to learn what pleases God and then do it. Avoid doing fruitless deeds of darkness and instead expose them as being destructive for yourself and others. Jesus commands us to not be shy with our goodness but to use it to point people to God: *“You are the light of the world...let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:14a,16.*

Q5 – Give an example of the pressure you face today by doing good instead of evil.

A Good Heart Welcomes God's Word

"...The seed is the word of God...the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop." Luke 8:11b,15.

Goodness grows in you by maintaining a tender heart towards God. By staying surrendered to the Holy Spirit you develop the desire to know God's Word and position yourself to grow in it. You are wise investing quality time by hearing, meditating, memorizing, and doing God's Word.

Persevering daily in learning and living out God's Word will produce impressive results. You will grow a bountiful harvest of spiritual fruit many times greater than what you invested in your spiritual transformation. The fruit maximized in you enables you to become more like Jesus in the way you think and act. Ask the Holy Spirit continually to prepare your heart to receive God's Word and cause it to grow so that you do the good you know you should.

Q6 – What are some things you do to stay open to receiving God's Word?

A Good Steward for God

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"
Matthew 25:21,23

God is your master who has given you everything you possess to take care of for him. He expects you to manage all of it wisely, so it facilitates and increases God's work until he asks for it back. Every person will be held to account for what they have done with the trust God has given them. Successful stewardship (management) produces kingdom gains and will be recognized by God as good work that will be richly rewarded by him on the day of accounting.

A good steward is a faithful servant who lives to please God with everything they have at all times: *"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."*
1 Corinthians 10:31

Being faithful to manage well everything God entrusts to you whether large or small is a privilege with great benefits attached. You get to participate in God's kingdom plan with the resources he provides, and you get rewarded with eternal blessings for doing it well. You will receive the ultimate commendation of being called good and faithful by God. You will get to celebrate with God in his happiness produced by the kingdom increase from your efforts.

Q7 – Give an example of treating the things you possess as belonging to God.

Full of The Holy Spirit and Faith

“(Barnabas) was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.” Acts 11:24.

It is an honourable thing to be acknowledged as a good person. Goodness has never gone out of fashion, particularly when someone of noble character is needed. Being good is portrayed by some people as weakness, but the opposite is true. Goodness displayed in a culture of evil requires extraordinary strength of character and resolve.

Barnabas’ real name was Joseph, but the apostles recognized his exemplary goodness and gave him a new name that means ‘son of encouragement’ (Acts 4:36,37). The following are some qualities Barnabas excelled in that every believer should emulate in our pursuit of goodness:

- Full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:24)
- Full of faith
- Influenced many people to follow Christ
- Notably generous to God’s work (Acts 4:36,37)

Q8 – Why is the effort to build a reputation of goodness worth it?

Prepared to Do Good

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially those who belong to the family of believers.” Galatians 6:7-10

The Holy Spirit is indispensable in your quest to be mature and exhibit spiritual fruit like goodness. Living under the governance and influence of the Spirit is a deliberate daily choice. You will be constantly tempted to satisfy the sinful desires within you but doing so will rob you of God’s blessing now and forever. You reap what you sow, whether good or evil. The more of yourself that you invest in spiritual growth, the greater your gain in the present and the future.

This Scripture presents practical advice for preparing yourself to live with a harvest mentality. You must condition yourself to not get weary doing good. Learn to take on what you are capable of with the Holy Spirit’s help. Maintain your health and energy level by taking care of yourself with proper diet, exercise, and rest. God’s promise is that you will reap a harvest on

your investment in God's perfect timing if you do not give up. Train yourself to be aware of the Spirit's leading and you will know what opportunities to serve are the right ones. While doing good to any person is expected of you, be extra alert to the needs of your church family and respond as you are able.

The following are some ways the Holy Spirit enables you to do good as you sow spiritually:

- He transforms your desires to want to please God
- He gives you direction as you keep in step with him
- He helps you discern good from evil
- He motivates you to be an active investor for your spiritual well being
- He empowers you to persevere and not give up doing good
- He increases your spirit of generosity towards others
- He connects and endears you to your church family for mutual edification

Q9 – What stands out for you in this list and what things might you add?

Your Response

- ❖ Action item: List what have you learned about goodness in this study.
- ❖ Action item: Thank God for your progress in goodness and ask God to continue its growth.
- ❖ Action item: Ask the Holy Spirit to keep you filled with his presence and power so that you will do good even when it is difficult.

LESSON 8 – FAITHFULNESS

“But the fruit of the Spirit is...faithfulness.” Galatians 5:22

Faithfulness is indispensable for having a reputation of good character. Someone who is faithful is known to be reliable, trustworthy, and believable. Faithfulness enhances the quality of life for everyone affected by it. Relationships are strengthened when each partner proves themselves to be true to their word, keeping their promises and vows. Individuals who exhibit faithfulness will always be in demand for positions requiring someone with proven dependability.

Like the other segments of spiritual fruit, the seed of faithfulness has already been planted in you by the Holy Spirit ready to be nourished to grow and flourish. While you must choose to be faithful, the Holy Spirit is the one who brings faithfulness to maturity in you through your ongoing surrender to his work.

Q1 – Why is unfaithfulness such a big problem in our day? What are some of the outcomes?

Biblical Faithfulness Defined

The Bible has lots to say about faithfulness. It means to adhere to the standard that God has established for every facet of living. It is following through on one's commitments to God, others, and self. It places a high value on being counted on to do what has been agreed upon.

A faithful person does not just start things but sees them through to completion. It requires determination and commitment to go the distance while facing temptations to give up. There are no shortcuts to growing up for anyone. Maturity requires long-term resolve to character building often at personal cost.

Q2 – Give an example of someone being faithful when it was difficult to do.

God Is Faithful

Every quality you desire to have in your life is perfectly demonstrated in God. The Bible teaches that God is faithful in all his ways. You can absolutely count on him to do what he says in his Word he will do. That reality is a foundation you build your faith in God upon.

Read the following Scriptures and think about the importance of God being completely faithful:

"I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he." Deuteronomy 32:3,4

"For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does." Psalm 33:4

"Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies." Psalm 36:5

"Who is like you, Lord God Almighty? You, Lord, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you." Psalm 89:8

Q3 – What are some amazing aspects of God's faithfulness noted above?

"Love the Lord, all his faithful people! The Lord preserves those who are true to him, but the proud he pays back in full. Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord." Psalm 31:23,24

"For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones." Psalm 37:28

"God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:9

"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." 1 Corinthians 10:13

Q4 – What are some ways God's faithfulness is special for those who know and trust him?

Examples of Faithful People

As previously mentioned, Biblical faithfulness means being trustworthy, reliable, and loyal to God's holy standard in all matters. That includes practicing fidelity in one's relationship with God through Christ by adhering to God's commands as well as by keeping one's word and completing commitments made to oneself and others in a way that honours God.

Take note of what is said about Biblical examples of faithful people:

"Therefore I urge you to imitate me (Paul). For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church." 1 Corinthians 4:16,17

“You learned it (the gospel) from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.” Colossians 1:7,8

“I (Paul) thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service.” 1 Timothy 1:12

“Dear friend (Gaius), you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you.” 3 John 5

“I know where you (the church in Pergamum) live – where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city – where Satan lives.” Revelation 2:13

Q5 – What are some practical ways these believers practiced faithfulness to God?

Benefits of Your Faithfulness to God

“A faithful person will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.” Proverbs 28:20

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’” Matthew 25:21,23

“But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance.” 2 Thessalonians 3:3-5

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

Q6 – What are some benefits for you being fully engaged with our faithful God?

Grow Your Fruit of Faithfulness

The Holy Spirit in you will maximize your spiritual fruit as you cooperate with him. You must surrender yourself to the Spirit continually, giving him access to do his work in you. You must choose to participate in growing up spiritually by doing your part, one step at a time.

As with all spiritual fruit, it is not a matter of you exerting self-produced willpower to grow faithfulness to the full. You must learn to rely on the Holy Spirit to empower you to persevere in the spiritual practices that facilitate your maturing process.

Faithfulness is being trustworthy no matter what. Whatever you commit to doing, you do. You value your reputation and willingly make the necessary investment of yourself to maximize your spiritual fruit of faithfulness. By submitting to the Holy Spirit, you will experience God blessing your effort with his presence, enabling, and growth.

Rather than viewing being faithful as an obligation to endure, look at it as an ongoing opportunity to act mature and build your track record of reliability and trustworthiness. Consider everything in your life a gift from God to be managed well so that he is pleased with your effort and will be glorified because of it.

The spiritual fruit of faithfulness will come into play in everything you do. You build your godly character by thinking, saying, and doing the right things constantly. That approach enhances your spiritual maturity and marks you as someone that can be counted on always.

Q7 – How has being faithful benefited you in the following dynamics?

- *Your relationship with God*
- *Your relationship with your spouse (or close friend if you are single)*
- *Your relationship with your family*
- *Your calling from God to deepen your relationship with Christ*
- *Your responsibility to effectively manage everything God has entrusted to you*

YOUR RESPONSE

- ❖ Action item: Remind yourself why faithfulness is an integral aspect of the fruit of the Spirit.
- ❖ Action item: List ways you demonstrate your commitment to being faithful to God and others.
- ❖ Action item: Ask the Holy Spirit to keep filling you with his presence and power so that you will be faithful in all things.

LESSON 9 – GENTLENESS

“But the fruit of the Spirit is...gentleness.” Galatians 5:23

Being gentle in your approach to people can produce impressive results. Rather than being harsh and overbearing, the person who shows a calm and considerate spirit can make a positive impact in a potentially explosive situation. For example, *“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Proverbs 15:1*

Sometimes the Bible translates the Greek word gentleness as meekness or humility. In our culture, these terms are often viewed as weakness. However, these traits are the opposite of being weak. Gentleness shows strength of character that practices restraint instead of undisciplined overreaction.

Picture a wild stallion that has been harnessed and trained. That is raw power under control. The horse is just as strong but uses that strength productively. Similarly, the person surrendered to the Holy Spirit can show restraint instead of reacting in anger or frustration or demanding their own way without consideration for others. That is power under control.

Q1 – Why is gentleness often viewed as weakness, not strength?

Gentleness benefits those who exhibit it and the ones impacted by it. How many times have you wished you had not reacted in an inappropriate way and said things that you would like to take back? How much better use of your time and emotions would it be to get things right the first time? God will help you do that consistently if you let him.

The fruit of gentleness will help you temper your interactions with others. The gentle approach will save you from taking regrettable actions that hurt others unnecessarily and require you to make things right. You benefit by having more time and emotional energy to invest in productive pursuits.

Others also benefit by your gentleness. People are endeared to those who are gracious and helpful when they are experiencing pressure and hostility. Conversely, they keep their distance from those that are constantly angry and explosive. Gentleness in you is an admirable quality that others will want themselves for interacting in their social circles.

Q2 – Give an example of a time you helped diffuse a heated situation with a gentle approach. What did you learn from that experience?

Moses – A Model of Gentleness

No one should accuse Moses of being a weakling or pushover. Read what the Bible says about him, and you will be impressed with his strong leadership to the nation of Israel, delivering them from Egyptian slavery and taking them to the doorstep of the Promised Land. For forty years Moses received directions from God and guided the Jews accordingly, often dealing with opposition and criticism while doing so.

The Bible makes quite a remarkable statement about this powerful leader: *“(Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.)” Numbers 12:3.* What does that say about the possibility of being strong person without being harsh?

We know that Moses was not naturally gentle towards others. In his younger years, he let his temper get the best of him when he killed an Egyptian taskmaster who was abusing an Israelite worker. By doing so, Moses alienated himself from the Israelites that he thought would thank him and he ran for his life to escape Pharaoh’s wrath. What might have happened if Moses had used a more measured approach? What did he have to learn about spiritual maturity?

God allowed Moses to spend the next forty years in relative obscurity to be matured in character and prepared to lead a nation and confront determined enemies. God did a supernatural work in Moses. The Holy Spirit was given to him along with those who led the people with him (Numbers 11:16-30). Moses was transformed from doing things his way to doing them God’s way, including how he dealt with people. Humbly accepting his directions from God, he fearlessly faced every challenge with truth in love, showing respect without compromising what was right.

Q3 – In your view, why is Moses a good example of strength under control?

Jesus – The Teacher of Gentleness

Jesus gives everyone an invitation to learn to do things his way to be spiritually nourished and refreshed. Instead of being overwhelmed with whatever we face, we can deal with it calmly and maturely every time: *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30*

As you study Jesus, you recognize the character qualities you need to have developed in your life to approach every situation maturely. Providentially, the Holy Spirit living in you is always ready to bring every one of those traits to fruition when you surrender yourself to his work.

Jesus' call is to take his yoke upon us and learn from him how to live well. A yoke is a device placed on two or more large animals connected to a load of some type that needs to be transported. As the animals move ahead, the yoke increases the ability to pull the load. The yoke feels like a restraint in many ways, but it is necessary so that the animals' strength is channelled for maximum effectiveness.

Jesus uses taking on the yoke as a metaphor for submitting to Christ as his disciple. It means to confess Jesus as your Lord and dedicate yourself to learning his ways and obeying his commands. While it seems like an onerous task, it turns out to be very doable because you receive God's enabling to do it. Instead of carrying emotional and spiritual burdens on your own, Jesus lightens the load for you when you learn and do things his way.

Q4 – Give an example of something you have learned by studying Jesus.

Jesus demonstrated gentleness to perfection. Everything he did in his human existence provides the ideal model to emulate. These are some of the ways Jesus was powerfully gentle:

- Jesus submitted himself to the Father's will in all matters.
- Jesus willingly suffered unjustly for the greater cause.
- Jesus turned the other cheek when he was insulted.
- Jesus held no grudges against those who persecuted him.

Q5 – How might Jesus have acted in these instances without gentleness?

Your Gentleness on Display

People should anticipate that you will always react appropriately. As a Christ follower, you must be known as someone who treats others with respect and value like Jesus does: *"Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near."* *Philippians 4:5.*

How much better would our world be if everyone remained calm while dealing with other people and facing difficult situations? Jesus expects his followers to show the world how to get along with others particularly the way they interact with other believers: *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."* *Ephesians 4:32.* Christ-followers are still human beings who will act imperfectly at times. Saying or doing something hurtful to another believer can happen. When you do, own up to it and

humbly make things right. And when you are the one mistreated, react with grace towards the other person and be ready to be reconciled.

When someone comes after you breathing fire so to speak, ready to blow a fuse about something that may or may not involve you, be quick to diffuse the situation with grace: *“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Proverbs 15:1.* Rather than adding fuel to the fire by reacting in kind, speak gently with words of reason and understanding for a calming effect.

Q6 – Give an example of how the gentle approach has worked for you.

Every person needs unshakable hope, but most do not know how to have it. You know that eternal hope comes through a personal relationship with Jesus, and you want everyone to know that for themselves. Jesus has commanded his followers to always live out their hope so that people who need it will see it and ask us how we got it: *“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.” 1 Peter 3:15.*

Speaking to unbelievers must be done gently and respectfully regardless of their approach to you. To keep your conscience clear, you must always act the way Jesus would if he were in your place. Even if you are falsely accused or maligned unjustly, you know that you have done what is right before God and your testimony remains intact.

Q7 – How can you be both gentle and truthful as a witness for Christ?

You must also exhibit gentleness when you interact with believers who sin: *“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.” Galatians 6:1.*

Believers who get caught up in sin need mature Christ followers to help them restore their relationship with God and others. They do not need sympathizers or enablers who help them continue in their sin. What is required is a firm hand that gently guides the sinner through repentance and reconciliation. The spiritually mature believer relies on the Holy Spirit to give them insight and direction for the situation and divine protection to keep them from falling into the same sinful behaviour.

Q8 – Why is confronting sinful behaviour necessary and why do it gently?

Produce Supernatural Gentleness

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” Ephesians 4:2

The expectation for you to conform to this Biblical directive seems impossible. ‘Completely’ is a comprehensive term that infers total compliance. To be totally humble and gentle always with one another, patiently putting up with each other lovingly, is not doable for imperfect humans. So why are we given this mandate to follow? Because doing it promotes unity and harmony in place of division and strife and because we do not do it in our own strength but in God’s.

Remember, gentleness is one part of the fruit of the Spirit that God has already implanted in you to grow and flourish. Surrender yourself daily to the Holy Spirit so that he can fill you and enable you to mature to live God’s way. You will have many opportunities to be gentle in your reactions to situations and people. Learn to monitor your level of readiness to interact maturely and compare it to previous experiences to measure your progress. Do this regularly and you will be encouraged to keep growing and producing spiritual fruit like gentleness.

Q9 – How does being actively engaged with your church family improve your potential for growing your spiritual fruit including gentleness?

YOUR RESPONSE

- ❖ Action item: List situations you could improve today with your gentleness.

- ❖ Action item: Learn to ‘clothe yourself’ with gentleness along with other virtues named in Colossians 3:12 (i.e. ‘wear as a spiritual garment’). Picture yourself doing that.

- ❖ Action item: ‘Pursue’ gentleness and other godly traits listed in 1 Timothy 6:11 by learning and applying them through Bible study and prayer.

- ❖ Action item: Surrender yourself afresh to the Holy Spirit and ask him to continue to produce his spiritual fruit in you.

LESSON 10 – SELF-CONTROL

“But the fruit of the spirit is...self-control.” Galatians 5:23

What is an area of your life that you want a better handle on? Has that been an ongoing challenge to bring into line no matter what you try to address it? Perhaps you have more than one area that continues to plague you and add complications to an already stressed-out life. Lots of people do not think they can change their behaviour, so they give up trying.

That does not need to happen to you as a follower of Christ. The Holy Spirit lives in you and will enable you to live a disciplined and fulfilled life. Surrender yourself to the Spirit’s fullness and he will empower you to do what you cannot on your own. The Holy Spirit produces spiritual fruit in you to help you act like Jesus would in your place. One of these supernatural attributes is the fruit of self-control, the ability to be disciplined in every area of your life.

Q1 – How much do you hear about the benefits of self-control today? Why do you think that is?

Self-Control Defined

The NT Greek word translated ‘self-control’ means to have power over oneself with the ability to hold back from doing what is not beneficial. You no longer feel powerless and overwhelmed by the evil passions that try to entice and control you to sin.

The evidence of the lack of self-control is everywhere you look. People try in their own strength to not give in to the desires of the sinful nature and usually lose the battle. Many lives are in emotional, relational, and spiritual dysfunction and they do not see any way to fix themselves. The world is full of broken people who are suffering the effects of routinely making bad choices: *“Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.” Proverbs 25:28.*

Unbelievers really do not know the way for them to be whole. They are not aware that God offers overcoming power to anyone who will accept it from him on his terms. Full surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ gives access to every supernatural enablement needed to live well and be godly (2 Peter 1:3-11). Any person can know God personally and experience God’s daily provisions if they choose to believe in him.

Q2 – Give a personal example of gaining self-control over a bad habit. How positive was that?

As a Spirit-filled believer, you have been given the supernatural potential to keep your sinful desires in check and not be hindered from living the way God has planned for you. Why then do many Christians struggle with maintaining their commitments to spiritual disciplines that promote personal well-being and fulfilment? The answer is that they focus more on themselves and their human inability than on God and his unlimited abilities. It is possible for anyone to become satisfied with their spiritual underperformance and make excuses for their lack of self-control. Consistently making poor choices adds layers of complications to our lives. It requires effort to apply yourself to producing self-control through the Holy Spirit and some will not do it.

Sadly, some people, including believers, boast about having no intention to be disciplined. That is unfortunate because the Holy Spirit is fully committed to enabling anyone to live in a way that pleases God. Review the section in the Introduction lesson of this study that examines the principles for an overcoming life in the Spirit from Galatians 5:16-26.

Q3 – When did it occur to you that you needed supernatural self-control? What did you do?

Say 'No' To Sin And 'Yes' To God

Self-control is the ability to resist temptations to sin and to live according to God's holy standard instead. Scripture reveals that this ability is graciously given by God to any person who will accept it: *"For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ..." Titus 2:11-13.*

Everything God has done for his creation is because of his grace alone. Being self-existent and self-sufficient, God does not need humans for a thing. We exist, acquire our sustenance, find purpose, and have secure hope for the future only because God has chosen to grant it to us. We are wise to never forget how good God has been and continues to be to us.

Jesus embodies God's grace as the Saviour from sin for anyone who believes and trusts in him. He came at his own cost to bring salvation for every person and to show humankind how we should live. Every follower of Christ must train themselves to recognize what is ungodly and worldly and say 'No' to it. That requires supernatural self-control.

We must also learn what godliness looks like and model it every day. You can learn to say 'Yes' to God and honour Jesus as you anticipate meeting him at any time when he returns to earth.

Q4 – What are some benefits of saying 'No' to sin and 'Yes' to God with self-control?

Self-Control is a Qualification for Spiritual Leaders

There are numerous qualifications for being a leader in the church. These are obvious and proven character traits in someone that gives evidence of their spiritual maturity and moral fitness to lead others. Spiritual leaders are already setting the pace for others before they are formally appointed to positions of authority.

Titus 1:6-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-13 outline a lengthy list of qualifications for elders, deacons, spouses, and their families. Read these over and you will notice that self-control is a requisite trait found in both Scripture passages. That makes sense because it is necessary for acquiring and developing all the other qualities. Self-control is indispensable for maintaining character development and being prepared to lead others by example.

Q5 – What are benefits of requiring high standards for a leader including self-control?

Self-Control is Necessary for Every Life Stage and Situation

The apostle Paul instructed Titus about the importance of maintaining his personal spiritual growth to be able to teach those he pastored to mature as Christ-followers. In Titus 2:1-10, Paul identifies the importance of self-control for character development. Older men, younger women, and young men were specifically directed to practice self-control. The same challenge was strongly implied for older women and slaves for godly living.

Look over the list and you will be impressed with the qualities exhibited by those who keep their lives in healthy balance. They not only build godly character, but they offer an excellent example for others to emulate.

Q6 – How would teaching self-control to all people change things?

Self-Control in Prayer and Spiritual Warfare

Spirit-filled living involves operating in the spiritual realm while engaging in the physical domain. In Christ, God has already given you direct access to him and everything you need to live well and be godly. You mature spiritually when you stay connected to God and deal with life utilizing the divine enablements he provided for you. You must intentionally prepare yourself to engage every situation with every spiritual advantage available to you, including prayer and God's spiritual armour and weapons.

a) Prayer

“The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray.” 1 Peter 4:7

“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.” 1 Peter 5:8,9

Q7 – Explain how self-control enhances your prayer life.

b) God’s Spiritual Armour and Weapons

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.” Ephesians 6:10-13

The devil and his evil forces are diametrically opposed to everyone who belongs to God through faith in Christ. He will do whatever he can to try to defeat you. It is up to you to stay prepared to resist Satan and, when you do, he will flee from you (James 4:7). As the Holy Spirit matures the fruit of self-control in you, you learn to discipline yourself to pray continually and stay protected by your spiritual armour.

Q8 – Give an example of self-control protecting you from Satan’s scheming against you.

Q9 – Describe how you put on God’s spiritual armour to take your stand.

YOUR RESPONSE

- ❖ Action item: Discuss with someone the significance of producing the fruit of the Spirit starting with love and finishing with self-control.
- ❖ Action item: List areas of your life where you need to see more self-control.
- ❖ Action item: Ask the Holy Spirit to grow self-control in you daily so that you will consistently say ‘No’ to what you should not do and ‘Yes’ to what you should. Give thanks to God every time that you do the right thing.
- ❖ Action item: Prepare yourself constantly through prayer and the spiritual armour to resist every one of the devil’s schemes.

SUMMARY

You have completed the Produce study about the Fruit of the Spirit. Hopefully you are encouraged by knowing that it is possible to become more like Jesus through the Holy Spirit working in you. You can be known as a person of noble character who makes the world a better place with your words and deeds.

Refer to the list of spiritual fruit regularly to remind yourself of the qualities that are already in you ready to be developed. As a follower of Christ, the Holy Spirit will continually mature each spiritual trait in you as you ask him and surrender to his supernatural work.

Make it your goal to remain fully engaged with God to learn how to live in a way that glorifies him. Be an example to others of Spirit-filled living so that they will want what you have. You have opportunities every day to influence others to experience life transformation themselves.

For further study, consider other Life Transformation and NEXT Discipleship courses designed to establish and facilitate your spiritual growth and equip you to help others do the same. Check out freedomkw.com/next for a listing of available courses.