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What is the Fruit of Your Life? (Part II)

Proverbs 24:33-34: (NASB) ³³*A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest,* ³⁴*Then your poverty will come as a robber...*

Special Guest/Co-Host: Vicki Grillo

Several weeks ago we began a conversation about how our lives bear fruit and how important it is to know what that fruit represents and how to cultivate it. We began to walk through the "fruit of the Spirit" from the fifth chapter of Galatians, taking a tour of what God expects from us relating to our character growth as we follow Christ. Today, the tour continues and as with any tour, it is important to stay with the group so you don't miss out!

Please see CQ Rewind from "What is the Fruit of Your Life? (Part I)," May 18, 2014 to review the first six Lessons in Fruitfulness we already covered. Vicki co-hosted that program as well and had just received a diagnosis of breast cancer the day before the program. Aggressive chemotherapy treatment followed and she has since lost her hair. We will add Vicki's specific comments to this Rewind in the color teal.

Now we continue with the remaining Lessons of Fruitfulness...

SEVENTH LESSON OF FRUITFULNESS: To be spiritually fruitful is to resolve steadfastness in the face of adversity, for we already know of the peace that waits for us. It may be a long road, but to be steadfast is to be strong in the Lord!

Patience, or longsuffering means endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance:

Psalms 27:13,14: The fruit of the Spirit is living our Christianity. How do we make the fruit override the trials and difficulties of life?



What is my lazy point, Learning Self-Control, Covenant Life Church

- *So, we read in Proverbs 24:33-34, it says, "...a little sleep, a little slumber; a little folding of the hands to rest and poverty will come upon you like a robber." The expression of his laziness is that he's not willing to control himself and deny himself sleep. And so sleep overtakes his life and keeps him from doing the work that needs to be done and that leads to financial poverty. So, as I thought about that, I began to ask myself the question this week, what are the things that I'm tempted to do instead of what I should be doing. I'll be honest with you, sleeping is not the primary thing that I am tempted to do instead of the good work God's called me to do.*

Sometimes we can get lazy, especially when we are looking at something ahead of us that is seemingly insurmountable. Is it easier to focus because the obstacle is so big, or is it overwhelming so the focus is harder? Probably easier, not only because it is so big but because I have a lot of down time. I spend a lot of my day just sitting and thinking. Typically my brain goes to my Heavenly Father. That is a huge blessing. It is the outside trouble that takes your gaze off of the Lord. When you do that, you end up in trouble. When we are busy working and cooking and taking care of children and whatever we do in our daily lives, it is harder to be still and know He is God. But when you can do that and really stay focused, the strength is absolutely amazing.

Galatians 5:22-23: There are nine aspects of the fruit of the Spirit - we have covered four thus far in the previous program. The first four - love, joy, peace and longsuffering - have their origin "from the outside in." We learn of joy through the examples of God and Jesus. We experience love as a result of the blessings of God and Jesus. The peace we experience truly is the peace of God which passes understanding. Long-suffering (patience) is experience-driven.

Now we have "kindness" (or depending on what translation you are using, might also be rendered as "gentleness" or "graciousness.") This aspect of the fruit is right in the middle - it is a kind of pivot point. What does it mean?

Gentleness: Strongs #5544 chrestotes (khray-stot'-ace); usefulness, i.e. moral excellence (in character or demeanor): 1) moral goodness, integrity 2) benignity, kindness

Gentleness (root word): Strongs #5543 chrestos (khrase-tos'); employed, i.e. (by implication) useful (in manner or morals)

So, integrity is a centerpiece of the fruit of the Spirit. How so? Perhaps our integrity is *built upon* the foundation of the first four aspects of spiritual fruit and *expressed through* the application of the last four.

God’s integrity: [Ephesians 2:5-7](#) **Jesus’ integrity:** [Luke 22:28-31](#): Just as the Father granted Jesus a kingdom, Jesus will grant us the same. He did exactly what he was supposed to do in following God. Goodness and integrity is inherent in God and inherent in Jesus. How do we make that inherent in us?

How do you live with integrity and gentleness in the context of a diagnosis like cancer? My fight is with my flesh (natural inclinations) and not with cancer. How do you know your fight is with your flesh and not with cancer? I have chosen to make it so, because I am following God’s principles. He has promised to overrule everything in my life. I have given my life to God, therefore anything that comes my way, ANYTHING, I truly believe is from Him to make me fit to serve Him and to do a job He has for me in the future if I can but ready myself. That is spiritual integrity defined. Because you have been called to a higher purpose, therefore the circumstances in your life, even as difficult as cancer, chemotherapy and losing your hair are overruled. God loves me bald or not! This is a chance for me to show Him that I love Him. Through this experience, my trust will show Him how much I love Him. Gentleness really fits in with integrity. I’m not judging anyone else’s relationship with God, but I know how He deals with me. I don’t question what the doctors say because I know God is overruling it all. I am not second guessing. If something goes wrong, it isn’t “oh, should’ve, would’ve, could’ve.” All I need to do is acquiesce to His will and grow by it. Does that mean you aren’t paying attention? No, just Lord willing, I will never say, “should’ve, would’ve, could’ve.” Jesus had that exact attitude about going through his final trials, even unto death. He walked that pathway knowing full well what would happen. Gentleness and integrity work so well together! When he was accused of being a blasphemer, he prayed that trial to be taken away from him, but acquiesced willingly to God’s will in the matter.

God’s integrity compared to our challenge of living with integrity: [1 Corinthians 15:33-34](#)

EIGHTH LESSON OF FRUITFULNESS: To be spiritually fruitful is to have our experiences shape us to such a godly extent that what comes out from us can only be understood as a Christ-like character.



Prayer to email to Twitter, Learning Self-Control, Covenant Life Church

- *What do I fill my time with that crowds out that more important activity that has eternal value? In other words, where do I need greater self-control? So, I asked the Lord this question. You know what the Lord said to me? Well, actually I didn’t get to hear what the Lord had to say to me because right at that moment as I was praying, I realized that I had not checked my email for like three minutes. So, I went and checked my email. I had gotten an email from a friend who sent me a link to this Christian blog with an article. So, I went and read this article, which was really good, and I felt really edified. And there was another link in that to another article which I read, and when I read that one it made me think of this really insightful thing that I could tweet. And so I went over to Twitter and I tweeted...*

Integrity changes everything. When you are dealing with someone who has no integrity, you have no barometer to measure that person’s thoughts and reactions resulting in the reaping of doubt and suspicion. However, when you are dealing with someone who has a clear integrity about them, you immediately reap confidence and trust. Why? Because integrity produces goodness! Virtue is conformity to a standard of right.

God’s goodness as a template: [2 Thessalonians 1:11-12](#): God’s integrity to us is expressed in the *good pleasure of His goodness!* Be faithful to what God is calling you. Is goodness part of your thinking process? Definitely. If I call myself a Christian, this is when the tires meet the road. I can walk around when life is good and say, “I’m a Christian! I go to church on Sunday!” To have the integrity return to God that His goodness is enough to fill me, so that is where my strength comes from and that is where my focus needs to be. You are working on conforming to the standard of right and that standard is defined by your spiritual call. That is the key to all of this - it is that paradigm shift to focus on the higher standard vs. the earthly standard. Yes, when battling a disease like this, you have to pay attention to the physical. What we are saying is, let’s see if we can pay attention in our life to things that are higher.

The challenge of a life of goodness in our world: Ephesians 5:8-13 To practice a life of goodness, realize that you are now a child of light; know what God expects of those who are children of light and expose that which is of darkness through God's light.

 **Facebook to Princess Bride, Learning Self Control, Covenant Life Church**

- *...So, I didn't mean to spend much time on Facebook, but there were these really interesting pictures of a friend's barbeque that happened a couple of weeks ago, so I went through that and before I left, I thought it would be really useful if I found out which character from "The Princess Bride" I'm most like, and so I did this little quiz. And I was actually annoyed because it said I was that little mean guy. That's so wrong. It's inconceivable, really. So, then I realized, I've not seen "The Princess Bride" for a long time, so I went over to Netflix and it's one of the movies you can stream. You can stream it live anytime you want, which praise the Lord for that! That's a blessing! What was I talking about? Self-control! I think I'm doing good with self-control! I think I'm doin' pretty good.*

That speaker is talking about the process all of us go through being distracted by this thing and that thing and the other. It takes virtue away from us, because we are not really focusing on which is the highest and strongest in our lives and can guide us through the most difficult times. Support is others living up to their goodness. People cook for us; they send us cards and emails. Even just walking around with no hair, people open the door for you and smile at you a lot more. There are a lot of good people out there and I couldn't do it without them. If you are not the one going through the trial of cancer, there is a lot you can do to help those who are going through such difficulties so that we all step up and step forward in developing the fruit of the Spirit. We want to have a spiritual viewpoint through our physical difficulties, regardless of what we each are dealing with. The focus on this program is God's grace. Throughout my entire life, He has prepared me for this. I can look back and see experiences where He has given me a little bit more strength, a little bit more faith, a bit more of all these things, so that now when the tires hit the road, it's about God's faithfulness. It is not about me. So He put you through "training camp," and now you are out in the field. Exactly.

NINTH LESSON OF FRUITFULNESS: To be spiritually fruitful is to think and act with such moral clarity that those around us cannot help but to see a sermon on the integrity of true Christianity.

The foundation of our faith: Hebrews 12:2 A "living faith" requires action! Hebrews 11:6 **Our faith is based upon the integrity of the Creator of the universe!** 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 The Scriptures are full of God's faithfulness. Knowing how faithful He is makes it easier for me to be faithful, because He will not ever leave me. The hard part, I think, for most of us is He promises to tell us who He is in Jeremiah 29:13: *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart* - but we need to set aside any preconceived ideas of what we think God will do for us, or what we think God's plan is. We need to be able to stop and see His plan rather than run ahead of it and develop it ourselves.

What is driving your life? Is the fruit of God's Spirit driving your life, or is the fruit of your own thinking driving your life? Which is it? We have to make the choice and then make the choice again and again, day by day. If we *don't* develop the fruit of the Spirit, we will fail to be faithful! James 2:14-18 James 2:26

Faith must be founded in that which is pure otherwise it has no integrity! Jude 1:3 Faith must be constant and complete in its applications; else we are vulnerable to the adversary: 1 Peter 5:7-9 We have to learn who God is and let Him develop His plan in our lives instead of our interpretation of what we would *like* His plan to be!

TENTH LESSON OF FRUITFULNESS: To be spiritually fruitful is to develop a living and active faith. This faith is required for us to grow, as it is the evidence of our receiving and appreciating the grace of God.

Gentleness/Meekness: Integrity draws out gentleness; for with a base of goodness and faith we can truly have a gentle and humble spirit in all of our life experiences. **Herein lies a core principle of spiritual living:** James 3:13: (NASB) *Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the **gentleness <4240>** of wisdom.*

When you see those in power exerting that power, there is no *gentleness of wisdom*. It is just an expression of power. God has the gentleness of wisdom He implants in our lives so we can

follow that rather than following other things in life. It takes incredible strength to be humble! Look at Jesus and what he went through.

 Self-control revealed, *Learning Self Control*, Covenant Life Church

- *In all seriousness, when I prayed about this issue, "Lord, what distracts me? What pulls me away from what I know You want me to be doing? Where do I lack self-control?" You know the areas that God brought to mind were all connected to media, to the Internet, to the new technology that we enjoy which is a great blessing. And great things can happen from it. You know, in a testimony from a baptism that I thought was so cool, that Phil Royer had reached out to Elaine through Facebook. What a great use of a new technology. And yet as I was just praying about where I need more self-control, it just felt like the spirit was just pressing in on me. This is the place. You know, I don't think I'm the only person.*

Things that have the greatest positive influence in our lives can also have the greatest negative influence as well. I think about King David with his great passion after God's own heart, but his passions got him into deep trouble.

Jesus' meekness as a template for us: [2 Corinthians 10:1-5](#)

An application of meekness with urgency in our lives: [Galatians 6:1-3](#)

Applying meekness/gentleness under pressure: [James 1:19-24](#)

Applying meekness in place of ego: [1 Peter 3:15-17](#)

Self-control/Temperance: Integrity presses self-control into action, for without it we cannot be transformed as we have covenanted to be.

ELEVENTH LESSON OF FRUITFULNESS: To be spiritually fruitful is to be meek - to be humble. We owe our call to follow Christ with our deepest humility, for heaven has no room for personal egos!

What do we make time for in our lives? What we HAVE time for and what we MAKE time for can be two entirely differently things. That is where self-control and self-restraint become such an important aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. We have to be diligent. Self-control is built on the shoulders of meekness to do things God's way. **The self-control of Jesus - a small but telling example:** [John 4:30-34](#)

[1 Corinthians 9:24-27](#): The first aspect of self-control is to focus your desire on the prize. This can transform your life from being overcome in the battle to being more than an overcomer. The second aspect of self-control is to understand the magnitude of the race we are in. The third aspect of self-control is to take nothing for granted - press on to the finish! We can't quit before the journey is over.

 **Proverbs 24:33-34 rephrased, *Learning Self Control*, Covenant Life Church**

- *I think a lot of us could rephrase Proverbs 24:33-34 and it could read: "A little web surfing, a little Facebook, a little folding of the hands around your smart phone, and spiritual poverty will come upon you like a robber."*

Do the most important thing in every given moment. Am I doing the most important thing for the Lord right now? Remember, sometimes that most important thing is spending time with your family. Sometimes it is making or eating a meal or literally taking a nap. Everything can't be only spiritually oriented because we still live in a physical body, but we have to do it all to the glory of God. Self-control is an absolutely necessary cog in the machinery of spiritual growth: [2 Peter 1:4-9](#):

Twelfth lesson of fruitfulness: To be spiritually fruitful is to discipline ourselves in the same manner as an athlete or a soldier for the sake of the cause of Christ. Unlike these examples, our cause and our discipline have no expiration date in this life...

Our cause, our discipline, is all to the glory of God. Whatever your circumstances, whatever the difficulty, however long the trial or tribulation, if we develop spiritual fruit, if we work it God's way, even if the physical circumstances end up badly, we are blessed eternally. And that is the most important thing.

*So, what is the fruit of your life?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Vicki!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*