

Do I Walk in the Spirit or the Lusts of My Human Nature? (Part III)

Galatians 5:16: (NASB) *But I say, walk by the spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*



In our last two episodes, we spent significant time reviewing and understanding the Apostle Paul's list of the deeds of the flesh in Galatians 5. His reason for such a detailed and uncomfortable list was to give us all a clear push forward and away from such things, so we can walk towards living a new life. To walk in the footsteps of Jesus and do God's will first and foremost should be the most important aspects of any Christian's daily life. In this episode, we continue examining the Apostle Paul's profound contrast between the deeds of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit by methodically examining each of the nine characteristics listed. What will these nine aspects of the fruit of the spirit teach us? They teach what a true Christian life looks, sounds and feels like!

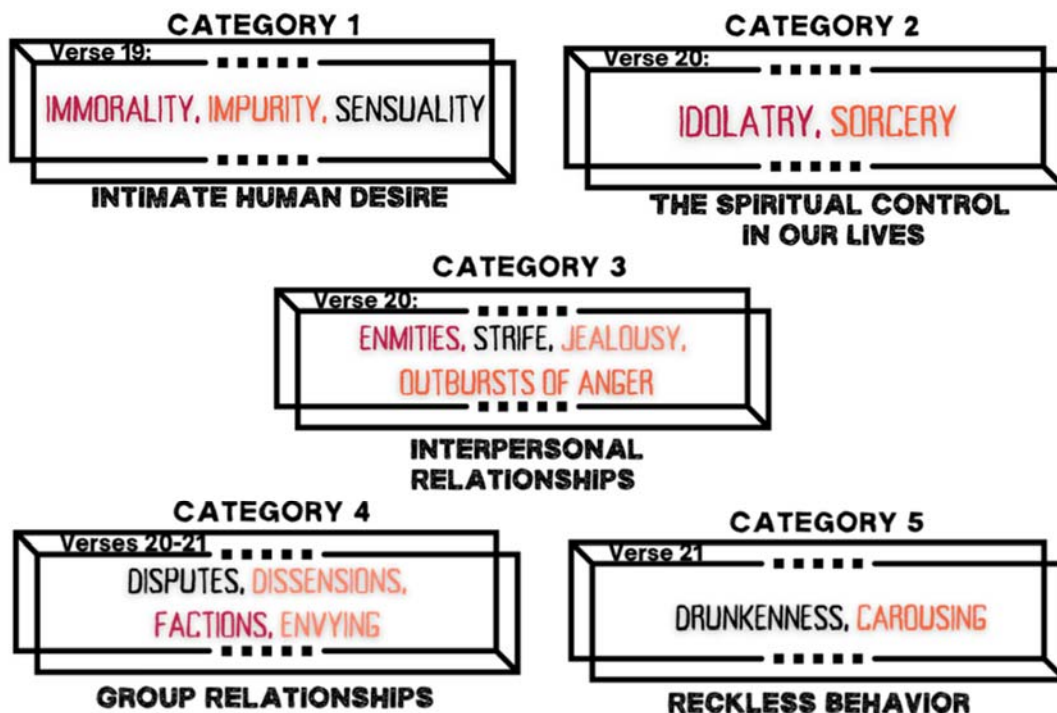
recap
recap

Let's begin by recapping the scriptures where the Apostle Paul's lesson is found:

Galatians 5:16-17: (NASB) *¹⁶But I say, walk by the spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh sets its desire against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.*

THE FIRST LIST IS THE **DEEDS OF THE FLESH**. THERE ARE FIFTEEN SPECIFIC DEEDS LISTED AND SET UP IN FIVE CATEGORIES.

¹⁹Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are:





After the above behaviors, Paul covers anything he may have missed by saying: *...and things like these, of which I forewarn you...that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

With this powerfully negative and revealing list in hand, Paul immediately moves on to a list of powerfully positive and life-changing characteristics of true Christians.



**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control**



Galatians 5:22-23: (NASB) ²²*But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

Please listen to Episodes 1254 and 1255 to review those awful deeds of the flesh, but now we finally get to concentrate on Paul's "good list!"

Paul's point with this stark contrast is obvious:

Galatians 5:24-25: (NASB) ²⁴*Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the spirit, let us also walk by the spirit.*

This means we are actively walking on a different path, going in a positive direction, away from what dishonors God.

What we truly live by dictates how we walk through life!

We want to look at the mirror of our heart, and consider several personal questions - how are we really doing?



What do all aspects of my life
tell those around me
about my life's mission?
Do they know what I stand for?

To build a life that reflects walking in the spirit, Jesus gave us some basic fundamentals to build upon.



Humility:

Matthew 5:3: (NASB) *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

To be *poor in spirit* is to be humble, which means we have an honest assessment of our talents, abilities and weaknesses.

HUMILITY:

not thinking of ourselves
more highly nor more lowly
than we ought to think,
but to soberly consider ourselves
IN THE FULL LIGHT of our
TALENTS, ABILITIES and WEAKNESSES



Humility is a profound basis upon which to develop the fruit of the spirit.



Constancy in sacrifice:

Luke 9:23: (NASB) *And he was saying to them all, If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.*

Matthew 16:24 says the equivalent, but this Luke passage includes the word *daily*. This shows a constancy of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. We must *take up his cross daily* - not just once.

Jesus taught us much more than humility and constancy in sacrifice, but for this discussion we will use these two simple points as a foundation for the detailed teachings of the Apostle Paul on the matter of living faithfully.

Now, let's focus on fruit:

Galatians 5:22: (NASB) *But the **fruit <2590>** of the spirit is...*

Fruit: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2590 *karpos*; fruit (as plucked), literally or figuratively: — fruit

Fruit means... fruit! It is not technical. It might be referring to a piece of fruit, or fruitage, something cultivated or grown. One thing to remember is we are not talking about the "fruit of Julie" or the "fruit of Rick." This is the *fruit of the spirit* - God's spirit, meaning His power and influence.

This word for *fruit* is a general word that has both a literal and figurative meaning. The figurative meaning is used many times throughout the New Testament.

For example:

Matthew 7:15-20: (NASB) ¹⁵*Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.* ¹⁶*You will know them by their **fruits <2590>**.* *Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?* ¹⁷*So every good tree bears good **fruit <2590>**, but the bad tree bears bad **fruit <2590>**.* ¹⁸*A good tree cannot produce bad **fruit <2590>**, nor can a bad tree produce good **fruit <2590>**.* ¹⁹*Every tree that does not bear good **fruit <2590>** is cut down and thrown into the fire.* ²⁰*So then, you will know them by their **fruits <2590>**.*

Jesus was teaching these fruity lessons:



- Good fruit comes from good trees. Good trees are cultivated and cared for, so they can bring forth good fruit. It is an intentional action to make a tree good so that it bears good fruit.



- The fruit from a diseased tree is often wormy, diseased and undernourished. A decaying tree does not bring forth good fruit.
- The fruit is the indicator of not only the type of plant, but how healthy that plant is.
- Some plants injure others and some grow fruit to nourish others. Some people are like thistles that cause injury - they scatter seeds of trouble - false doctrines, evil surmising and errors. Others are like thorn bushes who continually reach out to impede, irritate, annoy and injure whoever comes in contact with them.



Those who are God's people cannot live fruitless lives or lives that hurt others. Our fruit should be nourishing and refreshing to those around us. We should be seen as helpers, builders and peacemakers.

Our development of fruit is as a result of God's power and influence in the lives of true Christians. Whatever God's power and influence produces is always good.



Grapevines do not have thorns, but sometimes a thorny bramble bush will be entirely covered by a grapevine so that the grapes appear to be coming from the bush. But a good tree cannot bring forth an evil fruitage, neither can an injurious tree bring forth a good fruitage. Should we find some of the fruit of the spirit commingling with the thorniness of life - like an evil, injurious disposition - we can assume that in some sense of the word, the fruitage is merely put on and does not belong to the bramble-bush character.

Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

(Source: <https://www.thenational.com.pg/planting-a-tree-in-israel/>)

The history of modern Israel shows a denuded land, desolate and inhospitable. During the four hundred years (from about 1516 to 1918) the Ottoman Turks were in control of Palestine, the infamous "tree tax" was imposed. This meant that anyone with trees growing in their yard would pay a tax for each tree. The more trees you had, the more taxes you had to pay. To avoid paying any tax at all, some cut down all their trees. That left the land desolate.

Therefore, any tree that did not produce good fruit was cut down to keep from paying a tax on a non-productive tree. It was expensive not to bear good fruit!

One of the things the first Jewish settlers did at the turn of last century was to drain the swamps and plant trees. The reforestation program, spearheaded by groups like the National Jewish Fund, literally made the desert bloom. Soon vegetables and fruit trees were found to be growing in formerly parched and arid desert lands.

The idea of Jesus' disciples bearing fruit in conjunction with God's spirit began with the instructions Jesus gave them on the night before his crucifixion.



First, he spoke of God's spirit being an advocate (a helper) for his followers in his absence:

John 14:25-27: (NIV) ²⁵*All this I have spoken while still with you.* ²⁶*But the advocate, the holy spirit, whom (which) the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.* ²⁷*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.*

Jesus is talking about God's holy spirit - His power and influence - coming into the lives of the disciples. God's power and influence would come to replace Jesus as their comfort and guide, helping them to remember and understand all that he had told them.

When we have God's power and influence working in our lives, we are being guided from within by the grace of God. Jesus introduced this concept of the fruit of the spirit the night before his crucifixion.

The very next teaching of Jesus recorded in John is the tender and encouraging Parable of the Vine and the Branches. What is the point? FRUIT!

Abiding in Jesus through the spirit is for the purpose of growing spiritually:

John 15:1-5: (NASB) ¹*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.* ²*Every branch in me that does not bear **fruit <2590>**, He takes away; and every branch that bears **fruit <2590>**, He prunes it so that it may bear more **fruit <2590>**.* ³*You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.* ⁴*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear **fruit <2590>** of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me.* ⁵*I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in me and I in him, he bears much **fruit <2590>**, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

Abide in me, and I in you - Jesus is the vine; he is the plant. We are only the branches.



We must have the right spiritual nourishment and pruning. To a considerable degree, it is up to us the kind of nourishment we will have. God provides the "good soil" of truth, the "showers" of grace, and "nourishment" of precious promises, but it is up to us to determine how and if we will use any of what we are given.

Pruning does not always feel good, but it is so important. Trimming off our excesses (the deeds of the flesh) helps us focus on the development of fruit. This is why Paul puts the opposite characteristics of *deeds of the flesh* and *fruit of the spirit* together, so that we know to choose the *fruit of the spirit*.

Rising to a Spiritual Life



Developing the fruit of the spirit is not just something we do; rather, it is something we become. Reading about this fruit is one thing, but transforming into a person through whom this fruit can be seen and felt is another!



Am I producing thistles
and thorns or real fruit?
If fruit, is it wormy and diseased
or healthy and nourishing?

So, it is all about fruit! It is all about being one who has set their life in a direction that provokes godly fruit, not fleshly deeds.

Now that we know the fruit of the spirit is all about
what we are becoming, where do we start?

As we enter the fruit stage of the Apostle Paul's lesson, let's remember the context. The desires of the flesh lead us to the deeds of the flesh. Walking in the spirit is to walk away from such things and towards God's will. This begins with an intentional and focused decision to change.

Any decision as important and difficult as this needs a powerful and driving motivation behind it. It is much more than a typical New Year's resolution.



Galatians 5:22-23: (NASB) ²²*But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³*gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*



Check out our CQ Kids videos:
WHAT IS THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT?
christianquestions.com/youtube



the foundation for all that is to follow

Love: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #25 *agapao*; perhaps from *agan* (much) to love (in a social or moral sense)

#26 *agape*; from 25; love, i.e., affection or benevolence; specially (plural) a love-feast



The Greek language has at least eight different words for love - several of them are in the Bible with different meanings, ranging from family affection to brotherly bonding to philanthropic activity to pure benevolence.

The first levels of love are very much an earthly kind of love, and work in a conditional back and forth manner. *I do this and you love me. As long as you do this, I love you.* Once we reach a philanthropic love - having universal good will to all - we begin to rise above the "give and take" to just giving.

Benevolence - *agape* (selfless love) - is the highest form of love because it requires nothing in return. There is no reciprocation expected or required.

It is this kind of love, this highest form that expects nothing in return, that describes God's love, and it is this kind of love that is first on the Apostle Paul's list of the fruit of the spirit. Remember, it is the fruit of God's spirit in us, and this is the foundation for all the fruits.

This first fruit of the spirit (*agape* love) provides the driving motivation for any Christian to live as we are called to live.



is not a feeling,
it is an action

God loved us first. This fundamental truth helps us to understand this kind of love:

John 3:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶For God so *loved* <25> the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send the son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

Because God *loved the world He gave His... son* - love is an action, not a feeling. Love started with the Almighty God.



the night before
Jesus died

Jesus also loved us along with God and invites us to rise up to friendship and fellowship with him:

John 15:12-14: (NASB) ¹²This is my commandment, that you *love* <25> one another, just as I have *loved* <25> you. ¹³Greater *love* <26> has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you.

Selfless love is the defining point of what true Christianity is built upon. Notice how this flows - God has this special kind of love for mankind, so He gave us Jesus. Jesus has this special kind of love for mankind, so he willingly sacrificed his life on our behalf. We in turn are supposed to have this same kind of love for others. Here it talks about loving our friends, but elsewhere we are supposed to even have *agape* love for our enemies (Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:27).

Selfless love is very important for a Christian to develop. This is why it is the first fruit of the spirit because for most human beings, this is a radical idea. But through God's power and influence, we can develop this love if we allow it to work within us.



Paul begins defining God's love in a practical way for us to learn and apply it.

He starts in 1 Corinthians 13 by identifying how three public parts of our Christianity NEED love to be a foundational value in:

 *is not a feeling,*
it is an action

- what we say,
- what we know, and
- what we do.

 **What we say**





Many of us are familiar with this chapter from hearing it at weddings.

It is often called the "love" chapter:

1 Corinthians 13:1: (NASB) *If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have **love** <26>, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*

Without love, it does not count. I am just making a bunch of noise.

 Doesn't this *agape* love - the highest level - seem a little aspirational? Except for maybe parents with their children, completely selfless love is not usually our default.

 It is never our default! It is hard because it takes "me" out of the equation. This is what Jesus did - he was selfless. Part of the action of this love is in what we say. We need to speak in such a way that others can hear there is something selfless and sincere in us, driven by great integrity.

Our goal is Christian maturity:

Ephesians 4:13-14: (NASB) ¹³*Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, to a mature (meaning complete, of full age) man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;*

To be a mature Christian requires selflessness and the kind of love that does not require anything in return. (This still seems hard when it comes to loving our enemies!)

This is an ongoing theme - it seems hard because it IS hard. It is hard because it is the fruit of the spirit, not the fruit of us. We are trying to strive to a level that is not the normal human reaction or response.

Maturity in Christ means growing up and focusing on what brings growth and not attention (that *clanging cymbal*!):

Ephesians 4:15-16: (NASB) ¹⁵*but speaking the truth in **love** <26>, we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in **love** <26>.*



*Speaking the truth in knowledge...no.
in excitement...no.
in seriousness...no; this is not the point.*
It is *speaking the truth in love*.

What does this mean? Without any thought of personal gain, for the sake of others, we must speak the truth. This is a key factor of the maturity of *the body* of Christ. It is part of being in the body. Being "in the body" means that we are some small, little part of the whole. The body must grow together *in the building up of itself in love*. This selfless love is what nourishes it.

What we say has to be the right thing for the right reason. That is why it is a fruit of God's spirit within us.



What we know



1 Corinthians 13:2: (NASB) *If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have **love** <26>, I am nothing.*

The brilliance with which the Apostle Paul expresses himself as he teaches important things is phenomenal. *If I know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith* that is so powerful, it removes the mountains in my life, but I do not have this selfless love - it is useless.

He is showing us how fundamental love is. This is why it is the first on the fruit of the spirit list. It has to be there so that the rest of the fruit has a way to grow. This is a big key to understanding how the fruit of the spirit can flourish within us.

1 Corinthians 8:1-3: (NASB) *¹Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge (meaning, we know the truth on this). Knowledge makes arrogant, but **love** <26> edifies. ²If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; ³but if anyone **loves** <25> God, he is known by Him.*

Love edifies - it builds others up. We are profoundly privileged to know truth. But it is love that edifies. Knowing something is important, but its selfless application helps it to mean something to others.

If anyone loves God, he is known by Him - if we have selfless love towards God, He knows us!

Knowledge, even by miraculous means as a gift of the spirit, is meaningless unless God's love drives that knowledge.

We might be too focused on what we know and not on how we actually live. If I have not missed a day of church on Sunday for the last 10 years and can recite scriptures from memory, but it has not changed my character for the better, am I really becoming more Christlike? It is the transformation - the fruitage - that is important.



This is not to say that we throw knowledge away. However, everything we do, every way we grow, has to have this selfless love behind it. God has it, Jesus has it, and Jesus told us we need to have it towards one another. This is a direct command from Jesus from the night before his crucifixion. What we know is important but needs to be expressed through this benevolent love.



What we do



1 Corinthians 13:3: (NASB) *And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love <26>, it profits me nothing.*

Paul uses hyperbole here, if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have (selfless) love - it means nothing because it is just a show.

What we do needs to be driven - not by what other people will think of us - but by the recognition that this is an expression of God through Christ in us, and ultimately benefits those around us.

Matthew 6:1-2: (NASB) *¹Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. ²So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full (in this life).*

This has a practical application when we “accidentally on purpose” (a “humble brag”) let it slip about how much we donated to this cause or that, or letting everyone know what we did to help someone else - with the motivation of making ourselves look good.

Christian



Do I secretly like the label of “Christian” because people think I am something better than I really am?

Doing righteous acts is meaningless before God if they are not driven by God’s love in us. We are not saying to NOT do righteous acts if you find you are doing them for a selfish reason. It is still good to do things to benefit others. However, you should be looking to develop that selfless love for others as a Christian. We need to do righteous acts to benefit others, but we need to find that development in ourselves that reflects our selfless concern for them, too.



TIME TO GET PRACTICAL

Practical acts that show love for our brethren:

- Be slow to believe evil of one another
- Help ourselves so as not to be a burden on others
- Give with our whole hearts – not half-heartedly or with secret reservation or resentment
- Keep private matters private – no gossip
- Make allowances for individual peculiarities and temperament
- Help those with lower self-esteem to become spiritually strong
- Do not withhold words of comfort during trials
- Forgive someone multiple times
- Control our tongue

Rising to a Spiritual Life



A life of benevolent love that is modeled after God and our Lord Jesus is a life that has a solid foundation for walking in the spirit. Without this foundation, the other fruit of the spirit would never fully mature. Strive to learn, feel, express and live God's love. By so doing, it will open the door for true spiritual growth.

We have all heard that “love is the answer,” but let's take that one step further and say that God's love working in us is the answer.

With selfless love securely in place as the foundational fruit of the spirit, what comes next?

While this list of the fruit of the spirit is not in a specific order of development, its order does seem to suggest a sequence of sorts. Selfless love is the foundation. By its mere presence in our lives, it automatically opens up access to a kind of joy in life that most people cannot see or experience. This joy, which is based on God's love and plan, then brings a unique brand of peace to us that helps us process the traumas and tragedies of life.

This is how we will cover the rest of the fruit of the spirit:

-  **LOVE** EP. #1256 The **outgrowth** of selfless love ➡ *joy, peace*
-  **LOVE** EP. #1257 **Developed** based upon selfless love ➡ *patience, kindness, goodness*
-  **LOVE** EP. #1258 The **result** of selfless love ➡ *faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*





Why might self-control be last on the fruit list?



It is the culmination of all of these things. To truly have self-control is to truly be Christlike. The beginning of Christlikeness is that selfless love, development of the fruit is in the middle, and then it all requires self-control to deny our sinful fleshly tendencies. Selfless love and self-control are the bookends of the mature Christian character.

In summary, all the rest of the fruit of the spirit are either an outgrowth of selfless love, developed and based upon selfless love, or are a result of selfless love.



*a newly-produced gladness
based on selfless love and spiritual things*

Joy: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #5479 *chara*; cheerfulness, i.e., calm delight

True and lasting joy is a fleeting experience in our world. For many, joy is experienced as a one-off event, like with the birth of a baby or a wedding or the accomplishment of a difficult task.

The idea of joy being a fruit (a result of, or a fruitage) of God's power and influence on us implies that it should be always accessible and ever-inspiring.

Joy is supposed to be a steady baseline - not a moment, not an emotional outburst. It is a constant internal focus to help us move forward.



*a warmth that
lightens our hearts
during the dark times*

Fleeting joy is common, even among many who hear the name of Jesus. The Parable of the Sower is where Jesus explained how the gospel message, pictured by seeds, fell on four different kinds of soil showing how different attitudes of heart receive the gospel.



Parable of the Sower

Mark 4:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶*In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with **joy** <5479>;* ¹⁷*and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.*



The *rocky places* - these individuals hear the word of God and are overjoyed, as it gives them cheerfulness and delight. But because they cannot make strong roots in the rocks, when afflictions and difficulties arise, the initial euphoria soon fades away. This is a fleeting joy based purely on emotion, just like other experiences of one-off joy.

This is not the kind of joy we are talking about - the Christian's joy of the spirit is bigger.



How does God's spirit produce joy in us?

It opens our eyes of understanding to the power and impact of His plan.

Joy comes from understanding the all-encompassing nature of what God has done, is doing and will do through Jesus.

One example of joy in His plan on many levels, beginning with personal joy:

Luke 2:7: (KJV) *And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*

Being present for the birth of a child is a joy that is difficult to comprehend. After the difficulty of labor, it is amazing to have this beautiful baby.



We can imagine the joy Mary and Joseph must have felt at Jesus' birth! They were not worried they were in a stable. He was born, he was real, he was healthy - it was such a joyful moment. This was Mary and Joseph's personal joy. But wait...!

The birth of Jesus would bring much more than personal joy.

His birth would bring joy to the whole world:

Luke 2:8-12: (KJV) *⁸And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And, lo, the angel of the LORD came upon them, and the glory of the LORD shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. ¹⁰And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy <5479>, which shall be to all people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior, which is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*



The angel said, *I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people*. The birth of Jesus did not just bring personal joy to his parents, but his life eventually would bring incredible joy to all people, everywhere. Joy can happen on all kinds of different levels. But wait...!

The joy from the birth of Jesus brought joy in heaven as well:

Luke 2:13-14: (KJV) *¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*


The angels are rejoicing and *praising God*! This was not an act where they were "supposed to" praise God. This was angelic joy being expressed and the shepherds were privileged to hear. What an amazing experience!






The joy of Jesus' birth was personal, earthly and heavenly - on all different levels. This is a hint as to what kind of joy we, as Christians, should carry.

To be about the work of God through Christ is to know this joy and have it ever able to inspire us in whatever circumstances we may face.

 But we all get sad. Am I failing as a Christian if I am not running around throwing flower petals all the time? Is my "tree" and its fruit wormy if I am not producing fruit that is always joyful?

 We cannot confuse a feeling of joy with that baseline of the operation of joy. Jesus says in Matthew 26:38, *My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death...* Was Jesus throwing flower petals around, smiling and happy? No! But he had the joy of his Father in him. It was a hard time, but he had the steady flame of joy in his heart of knowing that he was fulfilling the plan of God which would save the entire world, as was promised at his birth. Just because we have hard times and have to go through difficult things does not mean we lack joy. We need to be able to harness it from within like Jesus did.


Here is another example of the spirit producing joy in us - focusing on Jesus and his joy:


Hebrews 12:2: (NASB) *Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the **joy <5479>** set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Jesus embraced the difficult experiences, *despising* (making little of) *the shame*. Why? Because the joy of God was driving him. Jesus' joy was focused enough to carry him through unimaginable pain, suffering and injustice.

(Reference article: *What is 'toxic positivity'? The harmful coping mechanism, explained.* Sara M. Moniuszko, USA Today, November 18, 2022)

There is such a thing called "toxic positivity." Therapist Melissa Dowd: "That's when you avoid all negative thoughts or feelings, pretending everything is going well when it's not." Psychotherapist Whitney Goodman describes it as the "unrelenting pressure to be happy and positive, no matter what the circumstances are." Suppressing our emotions and coating them over with something pretty may not allow us to process them in a healthy way. It is okay and even healthy to be upset, angry or annoyed.

 How is the fruit of joy not just a false veneer?

 This fruit of joy is from the inside out. Pretty much everybody struggles with emotions of anger, annoyance and despair. We have to go through these emotions to develop our understanding of the range of human experience. It does not mean we are joyless. It just means that for the moment, we are going through difficult experiences. Inevitably, if we process through them and put these experiences in the hands of God (His hands are bigger than ours!) we realize it is His providence that will bring us through.



This is where the joy comes in - that is where we have to get to.

We can feel the steadfast joy of God safely holding the outcome of our experiences in the palm of His hand, Isaiah 49:16. Also see Isaiah 41:10.

It is important to go through these things to develop us into sympathetic people who will understand how to help others in the future. The Apostle Paul was depressed at points; Jesus was sorrowful unto death. Elijah and Job begged God to take their lives. Many great individuals of faith went through hard times - but that does not mean they were joyless. Their joy was internal. As they dealt with their troubles, joy was expressed. It gave them the strength to forge on and finally found a way to surface.



the Apostle Paul was personally, emotionally and spiritually attached to the churches and the brotherhood

Here is another example of the spirit producing joy in us - joy in the brotherhood and their experiences:

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20: (NASB) ¹⁹For who is our hope or **joy** <5479> or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming? ²⁰For you are our glory and **joy** <5479>.

In other words, the Apostle Paul is saying: "I look at you and feel this sense of God's goodness and grace and it inspires me. You drive me. You give me joy."



Rick, I've known you for a long time. I've seen you sad to the point of tears. I've seen you frustrated but never to the point of giving up on yourself or anyone. You often use the phrase, "It's all good," even when things are most decidedly NOT good. How does this relate to your joy, and are you sure that isn't "toxic positivity," where you pretend to be happy because you know you are supposed to be?



No, no, when I say, "It's all good," I mean, "It's all good," even during some of the hardest experiences I have ever had to face. This is what that means: I may be suffering and may not want others to know all the details of that suffering at this moment. I may not have an answer, or know what to say or do, but I know that God's providence is there and will lead me, and I am just looking for that. So, "It's all good." God's providence will deliver me if I stay close to it. It is not like I'm having a great time, but it's all good because this is the lesson I am supposed to learn.

Joy is a basis for action - it is NOT just a feeling. It is the basis from which to say, God's providence delivers. Even if that delivery brings pain, it is still good because we are being developed in Christ.

Jesus taught us that his love and joy would be able to work in us:

John 15:10-11: (NASB) ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my **love** <26>; just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His **love** <26>. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you so that my **joy** <5479> may be in you, and that your **joy** <5479> may be made full.

You will abide in my (*agape*) love - but only if you keep my commandments. That sounds pretty conditional...! What does this mean?



To abide in the love of Jesus means we accept his redemption. Remember, the world cannot abide (dwell) in God's love or the love of Jesus because they are living in a sinful and unredeemed state. Jesus' command was to abide in what he was giving them - redemption. It is not possible to abide in his love without living in the redemption he gave us. The world will have the opportunity for redemption later, at their resurrection. We as Christians receive it now, allowing us to abide in his love.

I am picturing this like having two rooms. One room is completely dark. The other room is bright with light, and that is where the unconditional love, joy and peace are. As long as I am in that bright room, I am the beneficiary of the blessings.

The night before his crucifixion, Jesus prayed for us to have his joy:

John 17:13-14: (NASB) ¹³*But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have my **joy** <5479> made full in themselves.* ¹⁴*I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

This joy comes through God's word which God's spirit helps us understand. We looked at scriptures about the joy brought by the birth of Jesus. Now just before his death, he prays that his followers may have *my joy made full in themselves*. Joy "bookends" the life of Jesus.

With all of the ways joy is available, there will still be challenges with living in joy:

James 1:2-4: (NASB) ²*Consider it all **joy** <5479>, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,* ³*knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.* ⁴*And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

Our friend Vicki was the guest on our previous Fruit of the Spirit Series about the practical aspects of developing fruit during her cancer treatments.



One of her insightful comments was that she thought the scripture said, *Consider it joy...* But it actually says, *Consider it ALL joy*. The New Revised Standard version says, *Consider it nothing BUT joy*. Every part of the trial can be joyful if we have the faith that our Father gives only the experiences necessary - and only for the duration necessary - for our highest spiritual welfare. See, we just proved, "It's all good!"

Rising to a Spiritual Life



As a fruit of the spirit, joy is unlocked when we embrace the love of God as a basis for our lives and dwell in the magnitude of His plan. Joy is a natural byproduct of the spirit, as there can be no other response to such a wise, just and loving plan for all of mankind. In our daily Christian experiences, we need to allow the joy of God's plan to live, breathe and grow - even when our trials are raging!

Joy is easily overlooked, so let's work at keeping joy in the forefront of our hearts and minds - that is what Jesus did!



With the life-changing power of love and the uplifting presence of joy in our lives, what comes next?

The fruit of the spirit is love, joy and then there is peace. Think about a tumultuous day where there is furious activity, noise and distraction everywhere you look. Think about walking away from that environment and to a place of quiet and order. You take a breath and say, "Peace at last!" As Christians, we want to learn how to better keep this peaceful retreat accessible at all times.

CQ Team



Tamra is one of our Christian Questions volunteers. She offers a suggestion based on Romans 8:15: *For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, Abba! Father!*

Abba is considered to be an intimate form of "father," more like "daddy," but includes the thought of submission or obedience on our part. Tamra suggests transferring yourself from that difficult moment to a state of mind that triggers giving peace authority in your experience. When especially down or distressed, she imagines herself crawling onto our heavenly Father's lap, like she used to with her earthly father when she was little, to feel the comfort of His arms.

She says, "The peace of our *Abba*, our Father, our daddy, who soothes our fears and our mental pain, surrounds me. It is a place of rest." We are comforted because He knows all and has all authority over our experiences. And, we have absolute trust in Him - just like many of us did when we were little children with our own fathers.

We cannot get to that place of seeking peace unless we have the love of God within us and unless we can see and understand how good our Father is. If we do not believe in His utter and complete goodness, we would not want to be in His lap, under His control.



Peace: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1515 *eirene*; peace (literally or figuratively); by implication, prosperity

Greek-English Lexicon: 1) a state of national tranquility 1a) exemption from the rage and havoc of war 2) peace between individuals, i.e., harmony, concord 3) security, safety, prosperity, felicity, (because peace and harmony make and keep things safe and prosperous)



True and lasting peace always originates with God. Let's go back to the angelic proclamation of Jesus' birth:

Luke 2:13-14: (KJV) ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **peace <1515>**, good will toward men.

Interestingly, peace, joy and love come up again at the end of his life. We have referred to the night before Jesus' crucifixion a few times so far. This is the last time he will have with his disciples before he is crucified. It is a confusing time for them, so he spends a significant time comforting and teaching.

*On the night before his crucifixion,
Jesus comforted his disciples in four ways:*

- 1** He promised **God's spirit** would guide them
- 2** He encouraged them to **love** one another as he loved them
- 3** He gave them his **joy** by teaching them
- 4** He gave them his **peace**

Let's go back to that night:

John 14:25-27: (NASB) ²⁵These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. ²⁶But the helper, the holy spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he (it) will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. ²⁷**Peace <1515>** I leave with you; my **peace <1515>** I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.



Absorbing the character and devotion of Jesus as he faced death

No wonder the Apostle Paul teaches this in Galatians 5: *the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace...* Jesus lived it, so Paul taught it! It makes sense. It is remarkable how these three fruits are all demonstrated on that terrible night.

Not only does he talk about God's spirit being sent to them, but he introduces the basis on which the spirit will operate within them once he is gone.

For God's spirit to produce peace within us, we must be willing to live differently, beginning with putting on love as a basis for our lives:

Colossians 3:14: (NASB) ¹⁴Beyond all these things put on **love <26>**, which is the perfect bond of unity.



Once clothed with love, we have all things in harmony which can only bring joy! So, what does this combination produce?

Colossians 3:15-17: (NASB) ¹⁵Let the **peace <1515>** of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and (here comes the joy!) admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

love + joy = peace



If I am not feeling peaceful, does that automatically mean I am not growing the fruit of peace? It helps me to know that I can depend on the peace of Jesus, because if left on my own, my brain can get agitated and nervous like anyone else. But if I can picture that I am in that "bright room" with all the light, it is peaceful in there. I am promised peace if I am abiding in Jesus.

We are promised peace, but sometimes life is not peaceful. In fact, it is rarely peaceful! Sometimes life calls for us to act differently. Was Jesus acting peaceably when he cleared the Temple? (Matthew 21:12) That was not a peaceful act, but it was a necessary act. His Father's house was turned into a *den of thieves*. That was not tolerable. However, he had peace in his heart because he was doing the will of God.

The peace of Christ is to rule in our hearts. We must develop our capacity to not only house this peace, but to let it guide us through our everyday challenges.



TIME TO GET PRACTICAL

Remember we talked about some practical ways to show love in action to those in our Christian brotherhood?

When love operates in these ways, it does provide peace in the church and in our minds. It erects a barrier against the attacks of Satan because it sanctifies us and makes us more Christlike.

Joy and peace come from within. They are not like a raincoat we put on over the outside of our lives. Fruit is developed and grows from within, not placed on us from the outside. We do not try to "shield" our lives with joy and peace; we do not try to hide behind them. We let them grow within us so that we can cope with our life. They are a basis for action with confidence for coping and growing.

Giving this peace control is a result of God's spirit. It promises to be a powerful transformation:

Philippians 4:4,5,7: (NASB) ⁴Rejoice in the LORD always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵Let your gentle spirit be known to all men...⁷And the **peace <1515>** of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Peace does not just drape over us; it comes from within.
The peace of God surpasses explanation!



Some people do not understand how we can have that internal peace. Jesus had it going to the cross. He had it hanging on the cross, because he knew he was in the midst of his Father's will and the end result would be glorious. It is beautiful to develop peace through God's spirit.

Finally, one last text that brings our entire discussion of the first three fruits of the spirit into focus:

Romans 5:1,3-5: (NASB) *¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have **peace** <1515> with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

We are *justified* - we have been redeemed by our Lord Jesus, and that gives us *peace with God*.

³And not only this, but we also exult (here comes joy again!) in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

We can rejoice because those things that are causing us trials and stress are actually "all good" because they produce growth. Remember James 1:2-4 to consider these *nothing but joy*. The joy of God working with us comes from the "inside out," as does the resulting peace.

*⁵and hope does not disappoint, because the **love** <26> of God has been poured out within our hearts through the holy spirit who was given to us.*

We started these scriptures with **peace**. We have the **joy** of all these experiences. We have the **love** of God being poured out within our hearts, because of **God's spirit**. All four aspects of the first pieces of the fruit are here: the fruit of the **spirit** begins with **love**, **joy** and **peace**.

We are just beginning to unfold the fruit. This is just the introduction!

Rising to a Spiritual Life



As a fruit of the spirit, peace is a quiet but amazingly powerful asset. This specific and godly peace originates with our acceptance of God's plan for us and the entire world. We can only attain and maintain such peace if we freely let the love of God transform us and then live in the joy of that transformation. As fruit of the spirit, love, joy and peace are game changers!

They will make our lives different if God's spirit has dominion in our lives every day. Then we will learn how to have this love, joy and peace.



Galatians 5:22-23: (NASB) ²²*But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

In Episode 1257, we address the fruit that is developed based upon selfless love: patience, kindness and goodness.

In Episode 1258, we move on to the fruit that is a result of this selfless love: faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

There is so much good here to learn from the Apostle Paul's two lists. First, he gave us those nasty deeds of the flesh. Then we see how the fruit of the spirit unfolds. Let's look at the process Paul put in place and see there is hope, room for growth and God's providence. "It's all good!"

*So, do I walk in the spirit or the lusts of my human nature?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.



Join us next week for our podcast on November 28, 2022

Ep. 1257: Do I Walk in the Spirit or the Lust
of My Human Nature? (Part IV)

Study Questions follow

Christian Questions Weekly Newsletter

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Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1256: Do I Walk in the Spirit or the Lusts of My Human Nature? (Part III)

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1256-love-joy-peace/>

See:  **CQRewind**
SHOW NOTES

All questions are based on the fruit of the spirit list of Galatians 5:22-23:

1. What was Paul's point in contrasting the awful deeds of the flesh with the fruit of the spirit? Are you actively walking away from the deeds of the flesh? Do others know what you stand for? (See Galatians 5:25)
2. Explain two of the basic fundamentals Jesus gave us for walking in the spirit. What are his "fruity lessons" from Matthew 7:15-20? How do we become fruit of the spirit? Describe how we abide as branches in Jesus' vine. Is your fruit nourishing and refreshing to others? (See Matthew 5:3, Luke 9:23, John 15:1-5)
3. Give a brief description of the range of meaning in the words describing love in Greek. How does *agape* describe God's love? How did God love us first? How does Jesus love us? What does he demand of us? (See John 3:16-17, 15:12-14, Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:27)
4. The following questions are about 1 Corinthians 13:1-3:
 - a. How does 1 Corinthians 13:1 tell us to speak? What is required of a mature Christian? Why is this hard? What does "speaking the truth in love" mean? (See Ephesians 4:13-16)
 - b. What does 1 Corinthians 13:2 tell us about knowledge? What does love do that knowledge does not? Is knowledge of God's word unnecessary? (See 1 Corinthians 8:1-3)
 - c. What does 1 Corinthians 13:3 tell us about how to act? What needs to drive our actions - even charitable ones? What does it matter why we do righteous acts? Give some examples of loving acts. (See Matthew 6:1-2)
5. What is the difference between a fleeting joy - like the joy felt at a wedding - and the joy that develops as a fruit of the spirit? How is fleeting joy like a seed that falls and sprouts in "rocky places"? How does God's spirit produce joy in us? Describe the progression of joy that began at the birth of Jesus. (See Mark 4:16-17, Luke 2:7-14)
6. If we are sad, do we lack the fruit of the spirit called joy? Was Jesus always happy in his earthly life? Was he always joyful? How can we maintain joy in our hearts? What examples of faith do we have in the Bible that help with this? Why do they help? (See Matthew 26:38, Hebrews 12:2)
7. In what way can others in the faith give us joy? How can things be "all good" even when they do not appear to be? What is the difference between this state of mind and "toxic positivity"? How can we look at hard experiences with joy? (See 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, John 15:10-11, 17:13-14, James 1:2-4)
8. What must we believe in order to trust God to give us peace in the midst of tumult? How did Jesus comfort his disciples on the eve of his crucifixion? Read Philippians 4:4-7. What does this mean to you? (See Romans 8:15, Luke 2:13-14, John 14:25-27, Colossians 3:14-17)
9. What gives us peace with God? Do joy and peace stop our trials? Explain. How do the fruits joy and peace help you in your life? (See Romans 5:1-5, James 1:2-4)