

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

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



The fruit of the spirit listed in Galatians chapter 5 are much more than a recounting of nice things to develop as Christians. They are fundamental building blocks upon which any productive Christian life must be built. Whenever we refer to any of these nine characteristics, let's remember that there are two ways we can view them. Take love, the first fruit of the spirit, for example. Many people can exhibit selfless love in their lives, even if they are not Christians. However, the "fruit of the spirit love" is based on God's own example through Jesus, and therefore has a higher foundational meaning. The key to understanding all of these fruits is to see that they reflect God's ways and not the best of our ways.

Let's complete our discussion of these fruit and absorb their amazing impact:

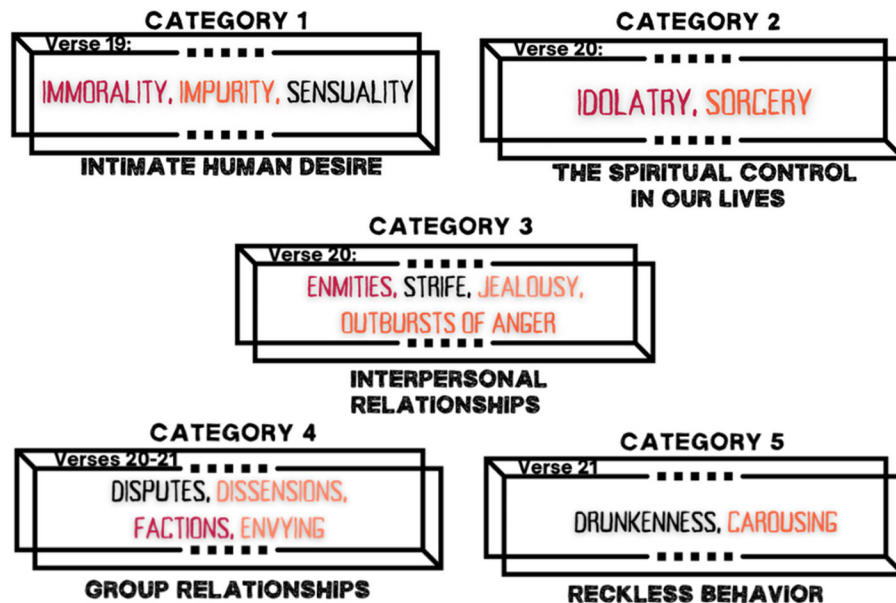
Galatians 5:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶*But I say, walk by the spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.* ¹⁷*For the flesh sets its desire against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.*

recap
recap

Paul then lists the deeds of the flesh.

THERE ARE FIFTEEN SPECIFIC **DEEDS OF THE FLESH** SET UP IN FIVE CATEGORIES:

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



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



With these powerfully negative and revealing deeds revealed, the Apostle Paul then 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 5:22-25: (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. ²⁴Now 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.*

Living and walking by the spirit in these verses is the fruitage of God's power and influence working within us.

In our last two episodes, we observed the first six characteristics of God's spirit in us.



the foundation for all that is to follow

Selfless love rises to the heights of giving that does not need or seek reciprocation.

This is how God loves us, how Jesus loves us and how Jesus taught us to love one another:

John 15:12: (NASB) *This is my commandment, that you **love <25>** one another, just as I have **loved <25>** you.*

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



As a fruit of the spirit, selfless love based on God's love for us is a lofty goal. Striving to learn, feel, express and live God's love opens the door for true spiritual growth. Love is the foundational fruit out of which everything else grows.



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



Joy means cheerfulness or calm delight. True and lasting joy is a fleeting experience in our world.

The joy we are given through the fruit of God's spirit implies that it is always accessible and ever-inspiring:

John 15:11: (NASB) *These things I have spoken to you so that my **joy** <5479> may be in you, and that your **joy** <5479> may be made full.*

Joy: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #5479 *chará*; calm delight--gladness



As a fruit of the spirit, joy is a natural byproduct of God's spirit, and we need to allow the joy of God's plan to live, breathe and grow within us, even when our trials are raging. Joy is internal and needs to grow to fill us every day of our lives. This is a very important, understated fruit.

What does this trial make possible?



Examining what the "fruit of the spirit" really is



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

Peace means peace (literally or figuratively), harmony, security and prosperity.

Similar to joy, this kind of sustaining peace is fleeting in our world:

John 14:27: (NASB) ***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.*

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



As a fruit of the spirit, peace is a quiet but amazingly powerful asset. We can only attain and maintain it if we let the love of God transform us and then live in the joy of that transformation.

In Part III, Episode 1256, we brought out how the selfless love of God produces a sense of joy. Add those two together and it equals peace. This does not mean that if we get sad or feel anxious that we have stopped developing fruit. All of this fruitage is bigger than just one moment or circumstance in our lives.



Focusing on FRUIT



a newly-developed discipline based
on selfless love and spiritual things

Patience, also known as longsuffering or forbearance, is a willingness to be non-reactive and to wait for a situation to completely unfold. It is to be disciplined in holding back:

2 Timothy 4:2: (NASB) *Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great **patience** <3115> and instruction.*

Patience: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3115 *makrothumia*;
(objectively) forbearance or (subjectively) fortitude



As a fruit of the spirit, patience is a developed discipline. It is watching and waiting with a spiritually-based perspective, responding with a godly response, and restraining our fleshly reactions.

Patience is an important basis for communicating with others.

Focusing on FRUIT



a newly-developed discipline based
on selfless love and spiritual things

This kindness means integrity and moral excellence.

It is not only about sympathy and helpfulness; it is also about morality and integrity:

Ephesians 2:5,7: (NASB) *⁵Even when we were dead in our transgressions, (God) made us alive together with Christ... ⁷so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in **kindness** <5544> toward us in Christ Jesus.*

Kindness: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #5544; *chrestotes*; usefulness,
i.e. moral excellence (in character or demeanor)

Greek-English Lexicon: 1) moral goodness, integrity 2) benignity, kindness



As a fruit of the spirit, kindness is clearly based upon the moral excellence that came from God and was exemplified in the daily human life of Jesus. It is a discipline developed through living in selfless love and applying the previous fruit of long-tempered forbearance.

With kindness, we also need patience and peace which are predicated on joy and love. As we study this fruit given to us by God, we see how these are all connected.

Focusing on FRUIT



a newly-developed discipline based on selfless love and spiritual things

Virtue

noun:

/ˈvɜːtʃoo/

a conformity to a standard of right

Beneficent

adjective:

/bəˈnefəsənt/

doing or producing good to others with generosity

Someone who is beneficent is generous and doing good.

Ephesians 5:8-9: (NASB) ⁸*For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light* ⁹*(for the fruit of the light consists in all **goodness** <19> and righteousness and truth).*

Goodness: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #19 *agathosune*; goodness, i.e. virtue or beneficence

Greek-English Lexicon: uprightness of heart and life, goodness, kindness



As a fruit of the spirit, goodness stands upon the development of the long-suffering of patience and growing the moral excellence of kindness. This uprightness of heart and life is the outward expression of forbearance and integrity.

When we look back over these six fruits, we see these characteristics working together as a unit. We do not develop these by ourselves. They come from and are developed in us through God's spirit.



What is His spirit?

HIS POWER AND INFLUENCE

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and goodness. What a tremendous list of godly attributes to build from!

**We are two-thirds through these amazing fruit of the spirit.
What have we learned and what can we still learn?**

In reviewing the fruit of the spirit already covered, we can observe some significant patterns. Love is the foundation. Joy and peace are direct results of us knowing the love of God as expressed through His plan for all of humankind. Patience/forbearance, kindness/integrity, and goodness/virtue are all developed because of our applying selfless love.



Developed based upon selfless love ➡ *patience, kindness, goodness*

The final three fruits will bring yet another pattern. They are no less important than the previous fruit as all work closely together.



Faith: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4102 *pistis*; persuasion, credence, conviction. Reliance (especially upon Christ for salvation) constancy (in such profession)

This fruit of faith (or faithfulness, depending on the Bible translation) means persuasion, credence, conviction, reliance and constancy.

This is an interesting fruit because you have to HAVE faith in order to RECEIVE God's spirit in the first place, and then you have to EXHIBIT faithfulness - it is a little circuitous. This faithfulness is about fidelity and staying in a place where we can be pleasing to God.

The kind of faith that is accessible through God's spirit is different than having other kinds of faith.

To have faith is to have a clear and convicted state of mind. One can have faith in erroneous beliefs and teachings and end up in a very deceived state of mind. Our faith must have its basis in a true comprehension of God, His plan and Jesus. Very strong faith brings very deep conviction and that puts one in a position to be able to act with courage.



A good example would be the great conviction of Saul of Tarsus when trying to serve God through his belief in the Law. His courage was misplaced. He believed that he should persecute the Christians. He had great faith, but in the wrong things.



Our faith must be based on the God of heaven, first and foremost. His track record is infallible:

Hebrews 11:6-7: (NASB) ⁶And without **faith <4102>** it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. ⁷By **faith <4102>** Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.



Our faithfulness is a prerequisite to being a true Christian. We cannot be true Christians without faith. Noah spent decades building this boat on dry land. We presume he was mocked by all of society. We want to have the faith developing within us - without which *it is impossible to please Him* - through God's spirit.



Our faith must be activated by the example of Jesus, who defined the Christian's journey:

Hebrews 12:2: (NASB) *Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of **faith** <4102>, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

This is saying Jesus' life provides clarity which every created intelligent being, spiritual and earthly, can follow.



For God's spirit to produce faithfulness within us, we must be in tune with what God through Jesus has done and is doing! It all starts with the selfless love (agape love) of God and Jesus and ends with our application of that selfless love in our lives. Jesus was able to endure the cross because of the joy set before him. His joy was more comprehensive than that one terrible moment in time. It was part of his inner being, unshakable by the outward circumstances he faced.



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WHAT IS FAITH?
christianquestions.com/youtube

Faith is how we apply what we have been given.



Our faith must be based on the same foundation as the faith demonstrated by the original disciples of Jesus:

Jude 1:3: (NASB) *Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the **faith** <4102> which was once for all handed down to the saints.*

We must have faith in what the disciples believed, not in what our church says if it is steeped in traditions and ceremonies, or on the other end of the spectrum, promotes a "modernization" of faith.

It is ironic when it says, *the faith was once for all handed down to the saints.*



How can we know what *the faith* is when there is said to be 31,000+ different Christian denominations?



The faith...once for all handed down to the saints was based on one thing - the Holy Scriptures. We must first discard any tradition and go back to the Bible and build the structure of doctrine, character and operation only by what the word says. If we do not carefully start with the word of God, it is easy to add, subtract, multiply or divide that faith. *The faith* comes solely from the word of God and is understood through the spirit of God.



That original faith stands upon the redemption of Jesus and the integrity of God:

Hebrews 10:22-24: (NASB) ²²Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of **faith <4102>**, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is **faithful <4103>**; ²⁴and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds...

We have a *full assurance of faith*. We are building the essence of faith's meaning. We have this full assurance because we have been sprinkled clean; we have been redeemed by Jesus. He who promised all this - God - is faithful. This is where we learn faithfulness. We learn it from the heavenly Father and apply it to our daily lives. His faithfulness to us is our example of how we should live.

Faithfulness is an exercise of growing in Christ through the begetting of God's spirit. This is a process, not a miracle. We are given faith, but we must have faith growing within us. This is why God's spirit provokes us so that we can have true faith based on what is true in His word.



Our faith in God's faithfulness grants us the absolute assurance of His care in our daily experiences:

1 Corinthians 10:13: (NASB) ¹³No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is **faithful <4103>**, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

This is not an escape, as in, we will have the trial removed, but it is a method of endurance so that we can go through the trial without having it crush us.

God is faithful so that we can be faithful. He is faithful to not remove our trials, but to give us the strength to get through them. When we see this, we understand the scope of His plan for us to grow in Christ through God's spirit.



Our faith is an action-producing faith as it is a fruit of God's own spirit, and He is a God of action:

James 2:14-18: (NASB) ¹⁴What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has **faith <4102>** but he has no works? Can that **faith <4102>** save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, Go in peace, be warmed and be filled, and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?

Our faith is not a "rocking-chair faith" or a "Sunday-go-to-church faith."

Our faith makes us act because it is so vibrant that it causes us to observe and respond. This is what true faithfulness does. When we add faithfulness to the rest of the fruits of the spirit, they become a powerful combination.

¹⁷Even so **faith <4102>** if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. ¹⁸But someone may well say, You have **faith <4102>** and I have works; show me your **faith <4102>** without the works, and I will show you my **faith <4102>** by my works.

A "rocking chair faith," where we are just sitting there, rocking away, letting things happen around us does not describe what we should be doing. **The result of real faith in God and His plan for humanity is ACTION.**





There is a difference between compliance and checking a box of what we must do (I have to go to church on Sunday, check, I have to read 10 scriptures a day, check), versus real action. We scripturally analyzed how all of this fits together in Episodes 1155 and 1156.



Our faith should provoke us to be different, to act differently, to see differently. If it is not, we need to ask ourselves why. Where is our faith coming or not coming from? This is a serious matter, as God's spirit is only in true Christians. This kind of faith is rare. If we are provoked to live in God's spirit, it requires living in the will and word of God.

Our faith gives us the ability to stand against enemies far more powerful than we are:

1 Peter 5:6-9: (NASB) *⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.*

Sometimes, depending on our human nature and weakness, we may have to cast all our anxiety on God 500 times a day. We just need to keep trying. Faith does not make us strong, but it gives us the direction and ability to grow spiritually. That helps us to be strong in the long run and in God's eyes.

⁸*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*
⁹*But resist him, firm in your **faith** <4102>, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.*



And this is powerful because it takes faith to act beyond your fear. There is one more aspect to this faith:

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon definition includes:
"fidelity, faithfulness - the character of one who can be relied on."

Reliability is revered and so disappointing when it is missing. Part of being Christlike is that people can depend on us. We do what we say we will. As a reflection of Jesus, we will act in a predictably Christlike manner.

Ability is important in our quest for success, but dependability is critical.
 — Zig Zigler

We cannot be dependable as a Christian without faithfulness to the principles of Christ. These are supposed to be exemplified in our everyday life.

Rising to a Spiritual Life



As a fruit of the spirit, faithfulness is a powerful result of selfless love and is related to all the other fruits as well. Joy and peace make room for faith to grow. Developing patience, kindness and goodness provide many practical ways for faith to be applied. True Christian faith is not a stagnant thought or emotion; it is an active and dynamic moving force in our lives. Our faith **MUST** produce godly works!



Is my Christian faith described as an active and dynamic moving force in my life?

Even though we are always talking about faith, seeing faithfulness as a fruit of God's own influence deepens our appreciation of it.

With faithfulness in order, we can now progress to the eighth fruit: gentleness. Is gentleness just being nice?

The further we go with all of these fruits of the spirit, the more we realize that each one carries a special meaning and impact for the life of any true Christian. Gentleness is no exception. The first thing to know about this fruit is that it follows faithfulness for a specific reason. The more we are filled with an active, dynamic faith, the easier it will be to let go of our own agendas and adopt God's spiritual agenda in their place.



a direct result of selfless love as a basis for all of life's endeavors

Gentleness or meekness comes from two different Greek words with similar meanings, depending on the manuscript the Bible translation was taken from:

Gentleness/Meekness: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4236 *praotés*;
gentleness, mildness, meekness

or

#4240 *prautes*; mildness, i.e. (by implication) humility



This gentleness or mildness gives us a sense of being “even” or “level” in character. It seems to carry the thought of not being one to cause unnecessary commotion.

Someone described as having an “even” temperament means they are not easily rattled or taken by surprise. They are steady and do not lash out, no matter their surroundings.



Gentleness is power restrained. Someone is not gentle because of weakness; but because they have mastered the ability to pull back when appropriate.

To really understand what this word for *gentleness* means, it is helpful to know what it does NOT mean. In some ways, the English language is less precise than the biblical Greek. A few episodes back, we talked about eight different descriptive words for our one English word, *love*. There are a lot of subtleties with *meekness* in Greek.

The following text uses our word for gentleness along with other words that can be easily assumed to have the same meanings:

2 Corinthians 10:1,3-5: (NASB) *‘Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the **meekness** <4236> (that is the same word we are talking about) and **gentleness** <1932> (a different Greek word meaning suitableness, equity) of Christ—I who am **meek** <5011> (yet another Greek word meaning humiliated, lowly) when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!...*

Gentleness: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #1932 from #1933 *epieikeia*; suitableness, i.e. (by implication) equity, mildness

Meek/base: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #5011 *tatteivos*; humiliated, lowly

In other words: “Now I, Paul, urge you by the mildness and the fairness (equity) of Christ. I am humble (lowly) when face-to-face with you, but Jesus is mild and even in character. He does not cause any unnecessary commotion. He is equitable, as he is able to see things fairly.”

When we look at the life of Jesus, we see his gentleness and fairness in everything he said and did.

It is important to note that this mildness is NOT wimpy or cowardly:

³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.



For God’s spirit to produce gentleness within us means it is producing an even-tempered character that does not look to cause trouble, but just wants to fulfill the Father’s will. Such a character is able to be widely used in the service of God our Father.



Do I want a character that can be widely used in the service of God?



This gentleness of character is a necessary trait. If I tend to easily fly off the handle, it means I am not as easily used by God. Am I my own worst enemy against being a tool of God's planned development? As with all of these fruits, gentleness comes from God and works within us.

Our evenness of character can open the door for some who have gone astray to receive the benefit of God's evenness of character:

2 Timothy 2:24-26: (NASB) ²⁴*The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged,* ²⁵*with **gentleness <4236>** (this is the Greek word meaning evenness of character) correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,* ²⁶*and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.*



Think about this power! The Apostle Paul is telling Timothy that those with responsibility in the church should gently correct those in opposition. They should not be gruff or overbearing in order to give the person an opportunity to see the error of their ways.

This is how Jesus did it. For example, when the Pharisees attacked him, he never retaliated. He answered with truth, compassion and the integrity of God's word. This is how we are to treat others, even when they are wrong. Give them someone to trust and help them back through repentance.

Our evenness of character provides a space for godly wisdom to settle in and flourish:

James 3:13-17: (NASB) ¹³*Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the **gentleness <4240>** of wisdom.*

Regarding the *gentleness of wisdom*, its power is not in its presentation; it is in its application.

For example:

Proverbs 15:1: (NASB) *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

Continuing in James 3:

¹⁴*But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.* ¹⁵*This wisdom... is earthly, natural, demonic.* ¹⁶*For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.* ¹⁷*But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle **<1933>**, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.*

Gentle: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1933 *epieikes* appropriate, i.e. (by implication) mild: gentle, moderation, patient

The gentleness of God's wisdom is a big part of what we are supposed to develop.

When we are so filled up with our own wisdom, there is no room for God's wisdom. God's wisdom will be at home in the Christian whose behavior and demeanor reflect God's ways. If we are full of ourselves and not humble enough, God's wisdom gets crowded out. Make room!



Our evenness of character is crucial if we are going to help those who are struggling with sin:

Galatians 6:1-3: (NASB) *¹Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of **gentleness** <4236>; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.*

We become spiritual by having God's spirit working in us.

³For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

We need gentleness in order for God's spirit to shine through us.



Scripturally, water is often symbolic of truth. Water easily flows over an even, smooth surface. It can flow with strength, creating a current of momentum.

If our character has that same smoothness, that gentleness, it allows God's word to flow freely. If our characters are full of bumps and obstacles of our own will, that water is not going to flow freely. Its power is diffused and diluted. When directed, water is incredibly powerful. Truth, when directed through a gentle character, has the same kind of power.

Our evenness of character will cause those who oppose Christ to, in God's time, be put to shame:

1 Peter 3:15-16: (NASB) *¹⁵But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with **gentleness** <4240> and reverence; ¹⁶and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.*



This type of character described my Uncle Steve. When I was a teenager, I remember his nickname was "Even Steven." He died many years later and I gave his funeral service. In preparation, I spoke with his family and friends. Not one of those people ever saw him NOT be gentle. I was amazingly moved by this. He had this sense that God will take care of it, and he would not budge. He was not wimpy, but he had a gentleness of character that was such an inspiration. Even Steven, my uncle.

Remember how Jesus acted in front of the Pharisees, Pilate and Herod? He had clarity, peace, and the ability to not respond even when provoked. Gentleness provoked by God's spirit leaves things in His hands. This helps us when our first instinct is to seek revenge on someone who has wronged us - even if we only play out that revenge in our own minds.

The key is to have the gentleness that comes from God. Our own is flawed. Let God's spirit of gentleness flow through us.

Rising to a Spiritual Life



As a fruit of the spirit, gentleness or “evenness” of character may look subtle, but it is in fact a characteristic that wields great power and influence. This evenness grows in strength in relation to the growth of our faith. We must learn to always “strive to not strive,” so the power of God and His wisdom can shine through us.

“Strive to not strive” - work hard not to cause trouble. Work hard on our evenness of character. Have it come from God’s spirit through the Scriptures to guide and direct our thoughts and actions.

Gentleness, having an evenness of character, is harder to attain and maintain than it may seem. There is no time like the present to start learning.

Faithfulness and gentleness bring us to the end of this amazing fruit-bearing road. What is the last step?

The Apostle Paul finishes this list of the fruit of the spirit with a very comprehensive and well-recognized fruit. It is the fruit of self-control. When you think about it, beginning this powerful list with selfless love and ending it with self-control sends an undeniable message: Take yourself out of the picture, so you can put yourself in order, so you can reflect the character of God through Christ in you.



Temperance: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #1466 *egkrateia*; self-control (especially continence), self-control (the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites)

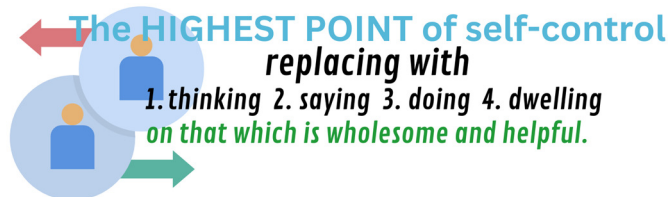
The root word for temperance: #1468 *egkrates*; strong in a thing (masterful), i.e. (figuratively and reflexively) self-controlled (in appetite, etc.)



The BEGINNING of self-control is the mastery of keeping yourself from four things: thinking, saying, doing or dwelling on that which is harmful or non-productive. We try to remove these. But we cannot stop there because we have to replace what is harmful or non-productive with something else.



The CULMINATION or highest point of self-control is the mastery of replacing four things - thinking, saying, doing or dwelling on that which is wholesome and helpful. REPLACEMENT is the key. We cannot just get away from something; we have to be moving towards something else.



This self-control fruit is perhaps the most in contrast with the *deeds of the flesh* list Paul provides us. If we have power over self, we will not act immorally, be jealous, have outbursts of anger, engage in drunkenness, and so on.

Selfless love makes it easier to control yourself. This is an especially important characteristic to teach our children.



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WHAT IS SELF-CONTROL?
christianquestions.com/youtube

Educate your children to self-control, to the habit of holding passion and prejudice and evil tendencies subject to an upright and reasoning will, and you have done much to abolish misery from their future and crimes from society.
— Benjamin Franklin

Even outside of Christianity, the world recognizes the value of having self-control. It is what helps to make a healthy society function.

Self-control begins with focus. A small, but telling, example in Jesus' life:

John 4:30-34: (NASB) ³⁰They went out of the city, and were coming to him. ³¹Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, Rabbi, eat. ³²But he said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about. ³³So the disciples were saying to one another, no one brought him anything to eat, did he? ³⁴Jesus said to them, my food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to accomplish His work.



Jesus had self-control. He knew his mission, and everything funneled in behind that mission - even the meal he ate or did not eat. That is mastery!

Jesus is the highest example of this fruit. His followers called him Master, and we can see the mastery that gave him the ability to live up to that name. If we are disciples of the Master, of whom are we disciples? We are disciples of that individual who can express and show us by his life, the tools we need to learn. Self-control clearly fits into all of this.



For God's spirit to produce self-control within us, we need to apply ourselves to observing and learning what naturally controls our life. We cannot control ourselves unless we are honest about what controls us.

Life is hard, and many things are beyond our control. But a lot of what we go through we bring upon ourselves from natural, unintended consequences of our choices. Without self-control, we open ourselves up to all kinds of temptations, mistakes and pathways we should not go down.

Having self-control requires us to intentionally focus on what is important.



Many times I am sitting on my computer working on Christian Questions, and my wife comes into the room with a question or comment. I usually say, "Honey, let me finish this thought," and finish typing a sentence. I have a choice: I can focus on listening to her while I am facing the computer screen looking at what I just did. OR, I can intentionally focus on listening to her by turning my chair away from the computer, looking her right in the eye and asking, "What is your question (comment, etc.)? Sorry to keep you." Intentionally focusing is to actually turn your focus and attention clearly and completely.



First aspect of self-control

Intentionally focus on what is important:

1. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27: (NASB) ²⁴*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.*



How clearly do I see the prize for which I say that I am running?

Am I running the race to be in the race or to actually win the race? Having my default be, "Well, at least I'm in the race," is not mastery.



Second aspect of self-control

Understand the limitations needed to successfully run the race.

To win, we have to eliminate or limit some things in our lives:

2. ²⁵*Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control <1467> (King James Version uses the word "temperate") in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.*



Self-control: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1467 *egkrateuomai*; to exercise self-restraint (in diet and chastity)



Have I intentionally limited or eliminated spiritually non-productive thoughts, words and practices?

There is only so much time in a day and only so many activities we can prioritize.

My Christian race is a serious commitment and must be the most important thing in my life. Everything else funnels in behind it. If not, then our Christian race is not THE most important thing.



Third aspect of self-control

Be "all in" and press on to the finish:

²⁶Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;
²⁷but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.



Am I running to win and not just compete?
Am I boxing or contending to hit the target and not just spar?

Having self-control makes my will in line with God's will. Does my body serve my will or God's will?



WHAT WE HAVE TIME FOR AND WHAT WE MAKE TIME FOR
CAN BE TWO ENTIRELY DIFFERENT THINGS.

This is where self-control and self-restraint become such an important aspect of the fruit of the spirit.

Proverbs 25:28: (NLT) *A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.*

Without self-control, our defenses are down, leaving openings for Satan's attacks.



Why does self-control fail?



Because we did not replace the deeds of the flesh with joy, kindness, peace and all the other fruit.

love joy peace
patience kindness goodness
faithfulness gentleness self-control



Self-control is not just saying, “I am not going to...” It is saying, “I am not going to, but instead, I will...” This is why it is the last of the fruit of the spirit. It gives us the panorama of looking back over the previous eight fruits, saying: This is how I express my self-control through love. This is how I express my self-control through joy, through peace, through patience, through kindness and on and on. Self-control is the culmination because it has to do with every other fruit of the spirit.



Self-control does not stand alone.
If it is not part of the machinery,
the machine does not work.

Remember, the fruit of the spirit must work
along with the fruitage of our own personal growth.

Come as you are...but don't stay as you are! Come up higher. — Christian Questions

Let's look at the following as an expression of putting self-control in place:

2 Peter 1:4-9: (NASB) ⁴...He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

His precious and magnificent promises - these are not just ordinary promises, they are precious and magnificent. We are to be given the divine nature, having escaped the corruption (deeds of the flesh) of our own desires.

⁵Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, ⁶and in your knowledge, **self-control <1466>**, and in your **self-control <1466>**, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, ⁷and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

We have the inspiration to put all this in place through these precious promises God has given us. Remember the promise that God is faithful, not allowing us to be tested beyond which we are able to withstand? If we put all these characteristics to work - with self-control right in the middle - we honor God. Think about a life that is honoring to God! This is one of the most amazing things we can aspire to.

⁸For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

Notice it says, *for if these qualities are yours and are increasing* - this is not a “one and done” attitude. We learn it, develop it, keep it and have it continue to grow. The fruit of the spirit is supposed to always be growing, always be developing, always be maturing. The ability to have self-control is the end result.

Self-control is a necessary characteristic of those who shepherd the flock:

Titus 1:7-9: (NASB) ⁷For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious (someone who is quick to argue or fight), not fond of sordid gain, ⁸but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, **self-controlled <1468>**, (notice that “self-controlled” is the last item on this list, just like the fruit of the spirit) ⁹holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.



Self-Controlled: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1466 from #1468 *egkrateia*; self-control (especially continence): temperance

These verses began with, *the overseer must be above reproach*. The Apostle Paul could have stopped there. Instead, he explains HOW to be held to a higher standard, how to set a good example. He describes how NOT to be, and then says we need to be *good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled so that* we can hold fast to the *faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching* delivered to the saints by the Scriptures. This enables the person doing the teaching - the shepherd of God's people - to be in charge in a clear, godly way.

Rising to a Spiritual Life



As a fruit of the spirit, self-control rounds out what God's spirit in us is capable of fulfilling. All of what has come before would be incomplete without self-control keeping our transformation focused. Let's strive for the mastery of ourselves for the sole purpose of having God through Christ be the only true Master of our lives!

Having God through Christ be the only true Master of our lives is only possible through having the fruit of God's spirit.

We just have to look at the headlines today to see how important self-control is when it comes to our overseers or church leaders. We see the failings when there is a lack of self-control and the secrets come out. Self-control is an important bookend to that *agape* love with which we started.



These fruits spirit were plainly displayed and taught by Jesus the night before his death. Selfless love is the foundation. Joy comes from embracing God's loving plan, and peace grows from that joy.



Patience means forbearance, which is self-restraint. Kindness means moral excellence and integrity. Goodness means virtue. These are developed through God's spirit, based on our living with selfless love.



To be faithful is to adhere in loyalty. To be gentle is have evenness of character, and to be self-controlled is to have self-mastery. These are the results of God's power working in us, and only develop in a character driven to live the selfless love that Jesus showed us.

These are the *fruit of the spirit*. We compared these to the *deeds of the flesh*. Choose you this day whom ye will serve - Joshua 24:15. Will we serve God in His way with His spirit, or will we go back to who we are because that is "good enough"? If we are following in footsteps of Jesus, it is never good enough to be just me - I must work through God's spirit, through His fruit.



*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 December 12, 2022

Ep. 1259: Do I Suffer From Rapture Anxiety?

Bonus Material and Study Questions

Our faith is based upon the integrity of the Creator of the Universe:

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24: (NASB) ²³Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

Philippians 1:3-6: (NASB) ³I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, ⁵in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

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.

An exhaustive look at the two words for *gentleness*:

Gentleness: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4240 *prautés*;
mildness, i.e. (by implication) humility

James 1:21: (KJV) Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with **meekness <4240>** the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

James 3:13: (KJV) Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with **meekness <4240>** of wisdom.

1 Peter 3:15: (KJV) But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with **meekness <4240>** and fear.

Gentleness: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4236 *praotés*;
gentleness, mildness, meekness



1 Corinthians 4:21: (KJV) *What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of **meekness <4236>**?*

2 Corinthians 10:1: (KJV) *Now I Paul myself beseech you by the **meekness <4236>** and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you.*

Galatians 5:23: (KJV) **Meekness <4236>**, temperance: against such there is no law.

Galatians 6:1: (KJV) *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of **meekness <4236>**; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

Ephesians 4:2: (KJV) *With all lowliness and **meekness <4236>**, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.*

Colossians 3:12: (KJV) *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, **meekness <4236>**, longsuffering.*

1 Timothy 6:11: (KJV) *But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, **meekness <4236>**.*

2 Timothy 2:25: (KJV) *In **meekness <4236>** instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.*

Titus 3:2: (KJV) *To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all **meekness <4236>** unto all men.*

Applying meekness/gentleness under pressure:

James 1:19-24: (NASB) ¹⁹This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. ²¹Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. ²²But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

A look at the word for self-control and its root word:

Self-control: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1466 *egkrateia*; self-control (especially continence), self-control (the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites)

Acts 24:25: (KJV) *And as he reasoned of righteousness, **temperance <1466>**, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*

Galatians 5:23: (KJV) **Meekness, temperance <1466>**: against such there is no law.

2 Peter 1:6: (KJV) *And to knowledge **temperance <1466>**; and to **temperance <1466>** patience; and to patience godliness.*

Self-control (root word): Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1468 *egkrates*; strong in a thing (masterful), i.e. (figuratively and reflexively) self-controlled (in appetite, etc.)

Titus 1:8: (KJV) *But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, **temperate <1468>**.*

Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1258: Do I Walk in the Spirit or the Lusts of My Human Nature? (Part V)

<https://christianquestions.com/program/1258-faith-gentleness-self-control/>

See:



All questions are based on the fruit of the spirit list of Galatians 5:22-25.

1. Give a brief description of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and goodness. What is God's spirit? What are some of the patterns surrounding these fruits? (See John 14:27, 15:11,12, 2 Timothy 4:2, Ephesians 2:5-9)
2. What are the meanings of "faithfulness"? What is necessary to receive God's spirit? Is it possible to be deeply convicted of something very wrong? Give an example. (See Acts 8:3, 22:3-4)
3. What attribute do we need to please God? What is promised if we have this? Who is a good example from the Old Testament of this attribute? What activates our faith? (See Hebrews 11:6-7, 12:2)
4. Upon what should our faith be based? Why do we need to be careful about following religious tradition? How can we be sure of what is "the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints"? How do we determine what is the truth of God? (See Jude 1:3, Hebrews 10:22-24)
5. What does Hebrews 10:22-24 tell us? Explain how our "full assurance of faith" grants us assurance of His care in our daily lives (See 1 Corinthians 10:13) Explain what this assurance should produce in us. (See James 2:14-18) How should we handle our anxiety? From what does our faith protect us? (See 1 Peter 5:6-9)
6. What are the definitions of gentleness? Does gentleness mean weak? If someone is angry, opposed to us, or is caught in any trespass, how should we, as Christians, deal with them? How does Proverbs 15:1 help us to understand why this approach is necessary? In what spirit should we "give an account for the hope that is in us"? (See 2 Corinthians 10:1-5, 2 Timothy 2:24-26, James 3:13-17, Galatians 6:1-3, 1 Peter 3:15-16)
7. What "precious and magnificent promises" has God given us? What characteristics should we apply according to 2 Peter 1:4-9? To be useful to God, what should be happening with these qualities? How does Paul explain what a good overseer (leader, shepherd) must be? What will all these characteristics enable the shepherd of the flock to do? (See Titus 1:7-9)
8. Review the fruit of the spirit:
 - a) Describe the relationship between love, joy and peace.
 - b) What is the basis of patience, kindness and goodness?
 - c) Of what are faithfulness, gentleness and self-control the result?
9. Which fruit are you especially working on?
Which gives you the most trouble?
Which is your favorite?