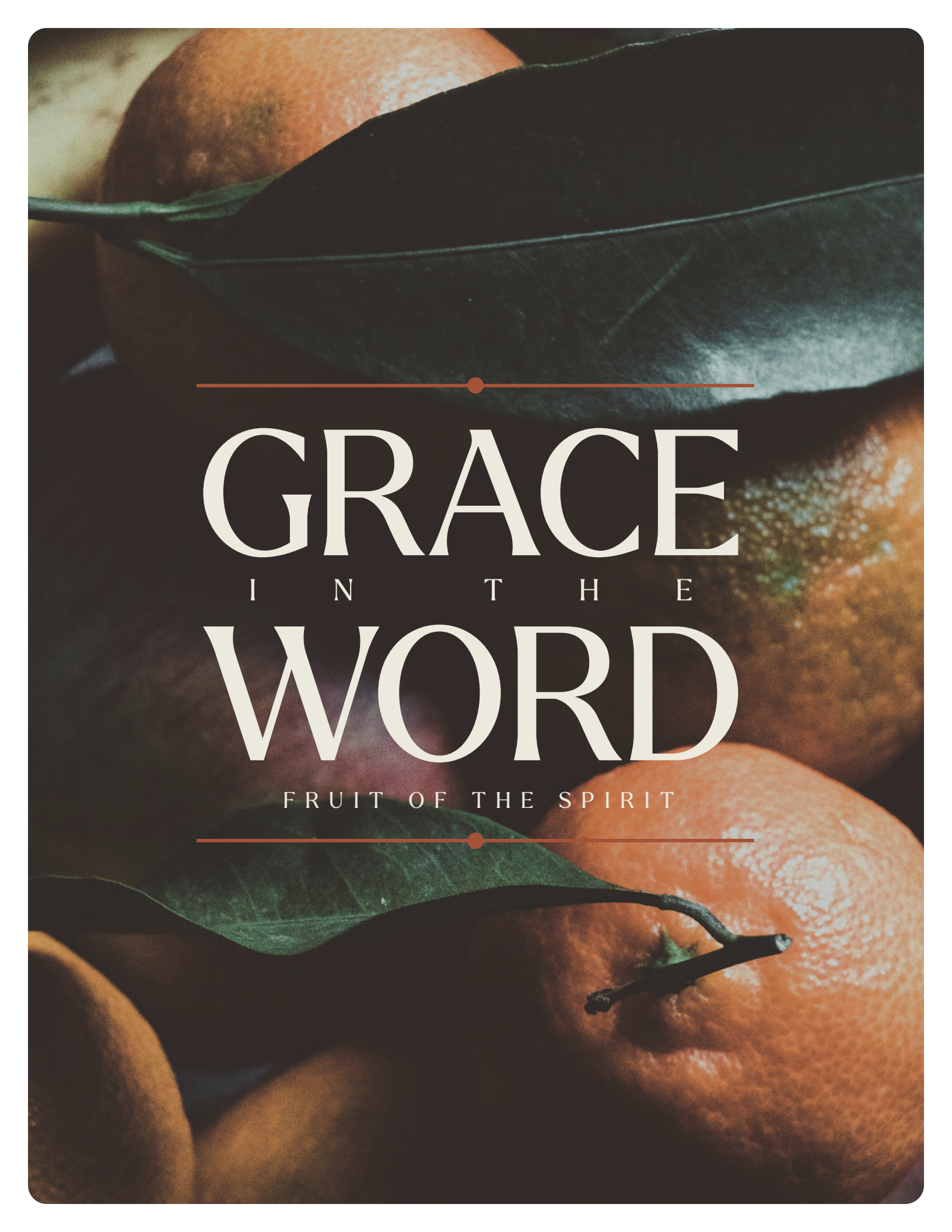




GRACE I N T H E WORD

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

About this Reading Plan

The Fruit of the Spirit is more than a list of virtues. The fruit is the evidence of a life transformed by the Holy Spirit. As we abide in Christ, the Spirit forms His character in us, producing fruit that reflects the heart of Jesus.

This 10-week reading plan is designed to help you grow in your understanding of Galatians 5:22–23 and the work of the Holy Spirit. Each week includes three days of study, along with additional Scripture passages if you'd like to explore the topic more deeply. You'll also find space for sermon notes and personal reflections.

For additional resources, visit graceclarksville.com/GIW, and follow us on Instagram and Facebook @GraceClarksville.

Some of the study material in this guide has been adapted from *Galatians* by N.T. Wright, *Galatians* by Gordon Fee, *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit* by Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Psychology of the Fruit of the Spirit* by Zoltán Dörnyei, David Guzik's *Enduring Word Bible Commentary*, and BibleProject.

Name & Contact Information:

What is your hope for this study in God's Word?

The Fruit of the Spirit Through Church History

We are not the first generation of Christians learning what it means to walk by the Spirit. For centuries, believers have testified that where the Spirit of God is at work, His presence bears fruit.

Irenaeus of Lyons (130–202) "Men, if they do truly progress by faith towards better things, and receive the Spirit of God, and bring forth the fruit thereof, shall be spiritual."

Augustine (354–430) "The Apostle had no intention of teaching us how many [either works of the flesh, or fruits of the Spirit] there are; but to show how the former should be avoided, and the latter sought after."

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274)

"The fruits of the Spirit... are so called because they are something ultimate and delightful, produced in us by the power of the Holy Ghost."

John Calvin (1509–1564) "All virtues, all proper and well regulated affections, proceed from the Spirit, that is, from the grace of God, and the renewed nature which we derive from Christ."

Dallas Willard (1935–2013) "The fruit of the Spirit, by contrast, give a sure sign of transformed character. When our deepest attitudes and dispositions are those of Jesus, it is because we have learned to let the Spirit foster his life in us."

John Chrysostom (347–407) "(Paul) says not, 'the work of the Spirit,' but, 'the fruit of the Spirit.' ... good works require not only our diligence but God's loving kindness."

Different centuries, but the same Spirit at work forming the character of Christ in His people.

Martin Luther (1483–1546) "For where the Spirit is, there assuredly the Spirit is not idle nor powerless. He proves his presence by ruling and directing man and prevailing on man to obey and follow his promptings."

John Owen (1616–1683) "Hence all graces in their exercise are called 'The fruits of the Spirit'... He brings them forth from the stock that he hath planted in the heart."

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) "All grace in the heart is the fruit of the Spirit."

J. I. Packer (1926–2020) "These nine habits that Paul called the 'fruit of the Spirit' ... are nine facets of Christlikeness."

Weekly Checklist

WEEK ONE

Fruit of the Spirit: Overview

- **Day 1** - Galatians 1:6–10, 2:19–21, 3:1–5, 5:1–26
- **Day 2** - Galatians 3:15–29 5:16–18, 24–25
- **Day 3** - Galatians 5:19–26, John 15:1–8

WEEK TWO

Fruit of the Spirit: Love

- **Day 1** - Galatians 5:1–14
- **Day 2** - Galatians 5:16–26, Colossians 3:1–17, Matthew 22:34–40
- **Day 3** - 1 John 3:23–24, 1 John 4:7–21, James 2:14–17

WEEK THREE

Fruit of the Spirit: Joy

- **Day 1** - John 15:9–11, Psalm 16, Habakkuk 3:17–19
- **Day 2** - James 1:2–8, John 16:16–33, Nehemiah 8:8–10
- **Day 3** - Romans 5:1–5, Romans 15:4–13, Hebrews 12:1–3

WEEK FOUR

Fruit of the Spirit: Peace

- **Day 1** - Isaiah 52:7–12, Colossians 1:19–23, Ephesians 2:13–22
- **Day 2** - Romans 5:1–2; John 14:23–27; Philippians 4:4–9
- **Day 3** - Ephesians 4:1–3, Colossians 3:12–15; Romans 12:17–21, Romans 14

WEEK FIVE

Fruit of the Spirit: Patience

- **Day 1** - 2 Peter 3:9, James 5:7–11, Micah 7:18–20
- **Day 2** - 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Ephesians 4:2, 1 Corinthians 13:4, Colossians 3:12–13
- **Day 3** - James 5:10, Jonah Chapters 1–4, 2 Peter 3:9

WEEK SIX

Fruit of the Spirit: Kindness

- **Day 1** - Romans 12, 1 Peter 2:9–10
- **Day 2** - 1 John 3:11–18, Ephesians 4:20–32
- **Day 3** - Proverbs 14:31, Proverbs 19:17, Matthew 25:34–40

WEEK SEVEN

Fruit of the Spirit: Goodness

- **Day 1** - Psalm 136, Psalm 34:8-22, Micah 6:4-8, James 1:16-18
- **Day 2** - Genesis 50:20; Romans 12:9-21; Acts 10:34-38; John 10:11-18
- **Day 3** - Galatians 6:1-10; Ephesians 2:8-10; Matthew 5:13-16

WEEK EIGHT

Fruit of the Spirit: Faithfulness

- **Day 1** - Deuteronomy 7:6-12, Lamentations 3:22-33, 1 Corinthians 1:4-9
- **Day 2** - Hebrews 11, James 2:14-26, Luke 22:39-46
- **Day 3** - Hebrews 12:1-3, Colossians 1:9-14, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, Revelation 2:10

WEEK NINE

Fruit of the Spirit: Gentleness

- **Day 1** - Colossians 3:12, Galatians 6:1-3, Matthew 26:69-75 and John 21:15-17
- **Day 2** - John 8:1-11, Mark 15:1-15
- **Day 3** - 1 Corinthians 8:6, Ephesians 4:6, Matthew 23:9, Psalm 68:5, Psalm 103:13, Matthew 6:9-13

WEEK TEN

Fruit of the Spirit: Self-Control

- **Day 1** - Galatians 5:24-26
- **Day 2** - Galatians 5, 2 Peter 1:5-9
- **Day 3** - Galatians 5

Prayers & Reflections

Before You Read God's Word Today, Seek His Help with these 5 Prayers

1. God, give me wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.
2. God, let any knowledge I gain help me love You and others more and not puff me up.
3. God, help me see something new about You I've never seen before.
4. God, correct any lies I believe about You or anything I misunderstand.
5. God, direct my steps according to Your Word.

*** Prayers from The Bible Recap Reading Plan by Tara-Leigh Cobble ***

Tips For Approaching Scripture

- Pray before you read (use the prayers above)
- Read the words in proper context, taking into consideration when it was written, to whom it was written, and what was happening when it was written (a good study bible is helpful)
- Look for God's character and faithfulness to His people
- Look for themes that point to Jesus
- Look for anything repetitive, unusual, confusing, hopeful, comforting, or challenging

Our specific prayer for this study:

*God, I pray that I may be aware of Your presence and of the Spirit working in my life. Today, help me abide in You so that Your fruit grows naturally in my life. **Fill me with Your love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.** Shape my heart to become more like Yours in the way I think, speak, and love others. Help me depend on Your strength instead of my own. Unite us as a church family, and use us to shine the light of Christ in our homes, workplaces, schools, and community. May our words, attitudes, and actions point others to You. We cannot do this in our own strength. We depend on You. Holy Spirit, let Your fruit be evident in my life. **Amen.***

Week 1

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: OVERVIEW



"The fruit of the Spirit is a kind of 'character-sketch' of Christ." — James D. G. Dunn

"Cultivating the fruit of the Spirit...is about making Christ visible and making the gospel attractive."
— Christopher J.H. Wright

Day 1 – Context & Background of Galatians

GALATIANS 1:6–10, 2:19–21, 3:1–5, 5:1–26

The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 is not a stand-alone teaching. It comes at the end of what Paul has been building throughout the entire letter. The Galatian believers began their Christian lives by trusting in Christ, but after Paul left, other teachers began telling them that faith in Christ was not enough. If Gentile believers wanted to belong to God's people, they were told, they also needed to be circumcised and follow the Jewish Law. Paul responds so strongly because this was not a minor disagreement. It threatened the heart of the gospel. If people could be made right with God through obedience to the Law, then, as Paul says, "Christ died for nothing" (2:21).

Paul's concern goes deeper than circumcision or rule keeping. Underneath it all is the question of how people are actually changed. Throughout Galatians, Paul contrasts relying on the Law and human effort with living by the Spirit. The Law could tell God's people what was right, but it could not change the heart. The Spirit, however, works from within, producing the kind of life God desires. That contrast becomes especially important in Galatians 5, and we will look at it more closely later this week. As we begin this study, it is important to remember the pressure facing the Galatian churches was not only religious but social and political. Paul is concerned with personal transformation into Christlikeness, but also with what it looks like for an entire community of believers to be transformed together. Outside pressures were threatening to divide the church, and Paul shows that only the Spirit, not rule-keeping, can produce the unity that reflects the gospel.

N.T. Wright says this on Galatians: "Paul is addressing a situation where angry factionalism, fueled by sociocultural pressure and threats from the outside, is threatening to tear the little Christian communities apart...**The whole letter is about church unity.** Paul again seems to be addressing a particular problem: people are bringing a competitive sociocultural mentality into the church. Perhaps small groups were arguing for subtly different positions, which would then splinter again; and perhaps these different positions would be held by people with slightly different cultural or political inclinations. **To live in unity and harmony, you need the Spirit, not the Law.** Thus, in the list of 'works of the flesh,' Paul concentrates centrally on character traits that express hostility. In the 'fruit of the Spirit,' he concentrates similarly on characteristics that make for unity."

Reflection

Are there expectations, rules, or cultural pressures that make you feel as though faith in Christ alone is not enough to be a "good" Christian? Where do you see the church being divided in ways similar to the church in Galatia? Why do you think Paul spends four chapters defending the gospel before introducing the fruit of the Spirit?

Day 2 – The Great Conflict Between The Law, the Flesh, and the Spirit

GALATIANS 3:15-29 5:16-18, 24-25

Paul's contrast between the Law, the flesh, and the Spirit is not an argument that rules are bad or that Christians should "follow their hearts." Rather, Paul describes the new reality created through Christ's death and resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Mosaic Law was God's good and holy gift to Israel. It revealed His character, exposed sin, and marked Israel as His covenant people. Yet, as Paul explained earlier in Galatians, the Law functioned temporarily as a guardian, like "guardrails," until the coming of the Messiah (Gal. 3:24-25). It could reveal sin and point toward righteousness, but it could not transform the human heart or free people from the power of the flesh. Returning to the Law as the basis for righteousness, then, was a return to slavery after Christ had brought freedom.

This was the heart of the problem in Galatia. False teachers were telling Gentile believers that faith in Christ was not enough; they also needed to be circumcised and keep the Mosaic Law to truly belong to God's covenant people. Paul strongly rejects that idea. God's people are identified by faith in Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit. In Galatians 5, Paul describes two very different ways of living: according to the flesh and according to the Spirit. By "flesh" (sarx), Paul does not simply mean the physical body, but fallen human nature turned away from God and living in its own strength. The result is the "works of the flesh" which highlights patterns of sin that damage both individuals and communities.

If keeping the Mosaic Law cannot transform the heart, the question becomes what actually enables believers to live the kind of life God desires. The Law still matters because it reveals God's character, exposes sin, and shows us the kind of holy life God intends for his people, but the power to produce that life comes through the power of Spirit. The alternative to legalism is not living however we want, but **life in the Spirit**. Those who are "led by the Spirit" are "not under the Law" (Gal. 5:18), not because God's moral standards have been abolished, but because **the Spirit accomplishes what the Law could never do**. As believers "walk by the Spirit" and "keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16, 25), He forms in them the kind of character God has always desired. This helps explain Paul's statement, "Against such things there is no law" (Gal. 5:23). As N. T. Wright explains, Christian freedom is not freedom to do whatever we want, but freedom to love and serve others. Paul is describing not only personal spiritual growth but a Spirit-shaped community marked by love, unity, and service rather than rivalry, division, and selfish ambition.

Reflection

In your own life, have you experienced the Spirit "holding back" old patterns or desires? What does it look like for you to "keep in step" with the Spirit today? How could this lead you to love rather than rivalry, division, and selfishness?

Day 3 – Singular Fruit, Unified Character

GALATIANS 5:19-26, JOHN 15:1-8

After listing the “works of the flesh” in verses 19–21, Paul turns to the nine qualities that make up the fruit of the Spirit. One important detail is easy to miss: Paul uses the word “fruit” (karpos) in the singular, not the plural. That stands in contrast to the “works” of the flesh.

The singular “fruit” suggests that the Spirit is forming a whole new way of life in us. These nine qualities are not a list we can pick and choose from, focusing on the ones that come naturally and ignoring the harder ones. They belong together. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are all part of the same Christlike character the Spirit is producing in us. We may grow more quickly in some areas than others, but God is shaping the whole person.

Paul’s picture of fruit also matters because fruit grows from life. A healthy tree bears fruit because it is alive, and in the same way, these qualities grow because the life of Christ is at work in us through the Holy Spirit. But that does not mean growth is passive. The Spirit begins His transforming work in us when we put our faith in Christ, and we are called to respond by “keeping in step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). Like a gardener tending a tree, we make room for growth through obedience, repentance, prayer, and daily dependence on Christ.

This is where the biblical idea of abiding becomes so important. To abide (menō) means to remain connected to Christ and to make Him the place where we live, depend, and find our life. **It is not about trying harder to produce fruit on our own. It is about staying close to Jesus and allowing His Spirit to shape us over time.** In *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit*, Christopher J.H. Wright describes the fruit as a portrait of Jesus Himself. As the Spirit forms Christ in us, these qualities begin to appear because they reflect His character.

Reflection

Which of the nine qualities do you find most difficult to express? How does it change the way you think about spiritual growth to know that the Spirit is forming the whole character of Christ in you, rather than asking you to “specialize” in a few individual virtues?

Ask the Lord to show you what it looks like to abide in Christ today, not by trying harder, but by staying close to Him, trusting His Spirit to change your heart and form His character in you.

[illegible]

Week 2

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: LOVE

LOVE (Agapē)

Actively seeking the well-being of others, regardless of their response.

"Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions." - 1 John 3:18

Day 1 – Love is the Sign of a Spirit-filled Life

GALATIANS 5:1-14

Love is a term we may think we already know and understand. Often love is associated with deep feelings of connection and affection towards another person. This is indeed one facet of love, but biblically speaking, the love that Scripture, and certainly the love that Paul is referring to in Galatians 5, is a love that goes further than feelings. The Greek word that Paul is using in Galatians 5 is **agapē**. Agapē love can most simply be defined as love in action. Agapē is a verb; it is work that takes place in our lives. This is the love that comes from our hearts and into our world and lives. It bridges the gaps, helps others, heals relationships, and serves God and His people.

As we discussed last week, the battle raging in the churches of Galatia centers on two false teachings. On one side was the belief that Gentiles must become circumcised, Torah-observant Jewish Christians to follow Christ. On the other was the idea that, because of their freedom in Christ, believers could live however they pleased, with full license and no moral restraint. Paul is attempting to explain to the churches in Galatia the true way of Christian living, a way that rejects both of these paths and instead embraces a life lived in step with the Spirit. A life in step with the Spirit is a life marked by the fruit of the Spirit. In Galatians 5, Paul bookends this argument with the fruit of love. He first mentions love in verse 6 as the response to legalism, and then presents it as the solution to the morally permissive view of the Christian life. **This true agapē love should open our hearts to the Spirit.** And to be open to and filled with the Spirit is to understand the way God has called us to live and then freely walk in it.

The things Christ calls us to, the laws, commandments, directions, and teachings He gives, are ultimately things of love. If we have spent any time reading about the life, miracles, teachings, and sacrifice of Christ, the centrality of love is undeniable. So, just as Paul explains to the churches in Galatia, love bridges the gap between legalism and moral license, because agapē love actively bridges gaps by moving us beyond ourselves and toward others in love and service.

Reflection

Which way do you find yourself more inclined to live: toward legalism or toward living as though you are free from moral responsibility? Why? How does Christ's love lead you to live in a way that is counter to both of these ways, a Spirit-filled way? What do you think the Spirit-filled life actively looks like?

Day 2 – Love is not a Cliché, it's a Command

GALATIANS 5:16-26, COLOSSIANS 3:1-17, MATTHEW 22:34-40

We all have a certain animosity toward clichés. We resist the idea that universal truths could define our individual thoughts, ideas, and actions. As a new parent, people told me over and over, "Your kids will grow up so fast." I hated hearing it. Yet it proved painfully true. One day my baby was crawling; then walking, running, talking, arguing, and then heading out the door to school. The older I get, the more I realize that many clichés carry truth. The things we hear again and again often point us toward wisdom that we are ignoring. The repeated truths can either be bitterly filed away as clichés, or embraced as wisdom and allowed to shape our lives. This is the choice we face with scripture's command to love.

We have heard a million times that we are called to love God and love others (Matthew 22:34-40). It sounds good and feels right, but after hearing it so often, we can become deaf and indifferent to its message; the truth is that love is the central fruit of the Spirit to which all others cling. Love is the first of the fruit of the Spirit that Paul highlights in Galatians 5. Why? Because **love is not a cliché but the defining mark of a life transformed by the Spirit**. Love is essential to flourishing in the Holy Spirit-filled life. It tops the list because it shapes how every other expression of the Spirit's fruit is lived out.

David Guzik, in his biblical commentary on Galatians 5 points out, "It is fitting that love be the first (fruit of the Spirit) mentioned, because it encompasses all of the following. It may even be said that the following eight terms are just describing what love in action looks like." Martin Luther originally stated it this way, "It would have been enough to mention only the single fruit of love, for love embraces all the fruits of the Spirit." (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*). Love matters. For the Christian, love of God and His people matters more than anything else. Love is the vehicle that allows the other fruit of the Spirit to take place and thrive in our lives. Until we are open to love, we will never be open to the other works that the Spirit is offering to perform in our lives.

Reflection

This week, resist the temptation to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the truth you have been taught, and perhaps already know deep down: love is the action of a holy life. To love God and His people is to live in the Spirit.

Where love feels like a cliché is probably indicative of where love is not being actively practiced in your life; take time to ask the Lord to fill you with His Spirit this week as you study love. Ask Him to show you what true love looks like and, more importantly, to help you actively live it in the places where it may feel cliché or where you've struggled to show it.

Day 3 – Seeing God in How We Love

1 JOHN 3:23-24, 1 JOHN 4:7-21, JAMES 2:14-17

Christopher J.H. Wright says in his book *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit*

"We are commanded not only to believe in the name of God's Son, Jesus Christ, but also to love one another and together they are one integrated command. If you do the first (believe), you will do the second (love). If you aren't doing the second (loving one another), you aren't doing the first (believing in Jesus). Don't try to split them, for they are both the single command of God: believe in Jesus and love one another. They go together.

So love for one another is not only the evidence of the life of God within us, it is also the evidence of the faith through which we came to receive that life in the first place. James said that faith without deeds is dead. John would agree by saying that faith without love (love that is proved in good deeds) is also dead—nothing but an empty claim. In fact, since "this is his command," it follows that if we aren't showing practical love for one another, we are simply disobeying the commands of the Jesus we say we believe in. And what kind of disciples are we then?

Our love for one another makes visible the love of God...We are supposed to be the living proof of the living God. No one can see God. But people can see us. And when we love one another, it is the love of God they see. When Christians love each other, it shows who they belong to. It points people to Jesus. Christian love is incredibly transforming, and in many contexts so surprising and countercultural that it can only be the work of Christ, the power of the gospel, the fruit of the Spirit."

– Christopher J.H. Wright, *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit*.

Reflection

Who is someone who has loved you in a way that you have never seen or felt in another person? What stood out to you about the way they showed you love? How intentionally and personally we experience love from another person is a powerful tether for us to walk in the love of Christ. To love others is to be able to show them the face of Christ. Reflect on what it might look like to echo that type of love to ALL of those you interact with today.

This week, take time to really read through the listed scripture references. Reflect on what they say about love. Reflect on what they teach you about love. Most importantly, be open and ready to put this love (agape) into action in your life and the world around you.

[illegible]

Week 3

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: JOY

JOY (Chara)

A deep, Spirit-produced delight anchored in hope that flows from God's grace, His presence, and the certainty of His character and His promises.

"I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!" - John 15:9-11

Day 1 – What Is Joy? (And What It Is Not)

JOHN 15:9–11, PSALM 16, HABAKKUK 3:17–19

When Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit, the second quality he names is joy (**chara**). People in the ancient world were searching for happiness in many of the same places we do today: pleasure, success, wealth, recognition, and a good life. When greek philosophers described joy they often used the word eudaimonia to describe human flourishing, something connected to virtue, achievement, and circumstances. Paul points to something deeper. He uses the word chara for joy, a word closely related to charis, meaning grace. That connection reminds us that true joy is not something we earn or create for ourselves. It is something we receive from God.

At the heart of biblical joy is the **joy of our salvation**. When the angel announced the birth of Jesus, he said, “I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people” (Luke 2:10). That good news is still the source of our deepest joy. Because of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, we can be forgiven, welcomed into God’s family, and given the hope of eternal life. That kind of joy does not rise and fall with our circumstances or depend on how well we are doing. It is rooted in God’s grace and in what Christ has already done for us.

That is why, after confessing his sin, David prayed, “Restore to me the joy of your salvation” (Psalm 51:12). He understood that real joy is found in being close to God. We were created to desire joy, but we often ask people, possessions, accomplishments, experiences, or circumstances to give us something they were never meant to provide. They can bring real happiness and enjoyment, but they cannot carry the weight of our deepest hope. Scripture reminds us that “fullness of joy” is found in God’s presence (Psalm 16:11). Our greatest source of joy is not a perfect life, but a faithful Savior.

Because our joy is rooted in Christ, it can remain even when life is hard. As we stay connected to Him, the Holy Spirit continues to form His character in us, including joy. Zoltán Dörnyei describes the fruit of the Spirit as “the ideal outcome of a divinely orchestrated transformation process to produce a Christlike character in the believer.” Joy is not something we have to force. It grows as the Spirit changes us and teaches us to find our life in Christ. This kind of joy can become one of the most compelling witnesses to the gospel. When believers carry a joy that is present not only in celebration but also in disappointment, grief, and difficulty, others catch a glimpse of the hope and life found in Jesus.

Reflection

Where have I been looking for joy apart from God? How does knowing that my joy is rooted in God’s grace change the way I face difficult circumstances?

Day 2 – Holding Joy and Sorrow

JAMES 1:2-8, JOHN 16:16-33, NEHEMIAH 8:8-10

Biblical joy is not about forcing a smile or pretending everything is fine. Jesus Himself experienced deep sorrow. At the tomb of His friend Lazarus, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). Later, as He prepared His disciples for His death, He told them, "You will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy" (John 16:20). Their pain would be real, but it would not be the end of the story. James echoes this when he writes, "Consider it pure joy... whenever you face trials" (James 1:2). He is not telling us to enjoy suffering. He is reminding us that God is still at work in it, using hardship to deepen our dependence on Him and form Christlike character in us.

The fruit of the Spirit is evidence of the Spirit's work within us, not the result of sheer determination. As He shapes us, He produces a joy that can remain even when our hearts are grieving. N. T. Wright describes the Christian life as learning to live in the reality of God's new creation while still living in a broken world. Because Jesus has conquered sin and death through His resurrection, sorrow never gets the final word. For the Christian, joy is more than a passing emotion. It reminds us that **God is near**, His promises are trustworthy, and our hope is secure in Christ. Christopher J.H. Wright writes, "(Christians) know that God can be trusted, even when life is at its darkest. And knowing those things deep down means that they can know joy as an objective fact or truth, even when they don't have joyful emotional feelings." God is with us and holding us in our darkest moments.

Nehemiah 8 gives us a beautiful picture of this. As Ezra read God's Word, the people wept as they recognized their sin and how far they had drifted from the Lord. Yet Nehemiah told them, "Do not grieve, for **the joy of the Lord is your strength**" (Nehemiah 8:10). They were not told to ignore their sorrow, but to lift their eyes from their failure to God's faithfulness. As they remembered His covenant love, sorrow gave way to the joy of forgiveness, restoration, and renewed fellowship with Him. The same is true for us. Our strength does not come from denying our pain, but from bringing it to the God who forgives, restores, and remains faithful.

Reflection

Am I trying to hide my sorrow instead of bringing it honestly to God? How does knowing that Jesus experienced sorrow encourage me today? As you pray, hold one hand open and silently name a sorrow you are carrying. Then open your other hand and thank God for one truth that gives you hope. "Jesus, hold both my sorrow and my joy. Help me trust that Your presence is enough today."

Day 3 – Joy Rooted in Hope

ROMANS 5:1–5, ROMANS 15:4–13, HEBREWS 12:1–3

Earlier this week, we saw that joy is rooted in our salvation and can remain even when life is hard. Today, we see that joy also grows as we keep our eyes on the hope we have in Christ. Biblical hope is more than wishful thinking or simply trying to stay positive. It is confidence that God will keep His promises. Because our future is secure in Christ, what we are facing right now does not have the final word. Paul reminds us in Romans 5 that God does not waste our suffering. He uses even difficult seasons to grow perseverance, shape our character, and deepen our hope. And that hope is grounded in the love of God, which “has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5:5). **Christian joy is not the absence of hardship but the confidence that God is at work even when we cannot yet see the outcome.**

In Romans 15, Paul says that Scripture was given “so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope” (Romans 15:4). Remembering God’s faithfulness strengthens our hope. Paul then prays, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13). Joy and hope grow as we trust God and depend on His Spirit.

Hebrews points us to Jesus, who endured the cross “for the joy set before Him” (Hebrews 12:2). He knew the cross was not the end of the story. Resurrection and redemption were coming. When we fix our eyes on Jesus, we are reminded that our hope is not just an idea—it is found in a Person. Because He has conquered sin and death, we can walk through hardship knowing that suffering will not have the final word. Theologian Jürgen Moltmann called Christianity “**a unique religion of joy**” because our hope is grounded in the risen Christ. Karl Barth also noted that much of our joy comes from looking forward to something good. For Christians, that hope is not uncertain. We are looking ahead to the day when Christ will make all things new, wipe away every tear, and bring sorrow to an end. As we remember God’s faithfulness, trust His promises, and keep our eyes on Jesus, the Holy Spirit grows in us a joy that can carry us through hardship and spill over into the lives of others.

Reflection

What are you placing your hope in that cannot ultimately keep its promises? Where is God inviting you to exchange fear, control, or discouragement for confidence in His promises?
Who in your life needs to see the hope of Christ reflected through your joy this week?

[illegible]

Week 4

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: PEACE

PEACE (eirēnē)

More than inner calm or the absence of conflict, but the Spirit-produced flourishing that transforms our relationship with God, ourselves, and others through the work of Christ.

"Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts, for as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful."

- Colossians 3:12-15

Day 1 – What Is Biblical Peace?

ISAIAH 52:7-12, COLOSSIANS 1:19-23, EPHESIANS 2:13-22

Most of us think of peace as the absence of conflict or the feeling of being calm. The Bible gives us a much fuller picture. The Hebrew word for peace is **shalom**, and it describes life as God intended it to be: whole, flourishing, and in right relationship with God, others, ourselves, and creation. When Paul lists peace in Galatians 5, he uses the Greek word **eirēnē**, which carries this rich Old Testament idea of shalom. Biblical peace is not just the absence of conflict. It is the presence of God's restoring work. It reflects His desire for His people to experience wholeness, security, and flourishing as they live under His good rule. As we trust Him, we learn to rest in His presence, finding freedom from fear, deeper contentment, and the security of belonging to Him. **Even in a broken world, shalom reminds us that God is at work making all things new.**

This picture of shalom runs throughout the story of Scripture. From the beginning, God has been working to restore the peace that sin shattered, and the prophets looked forward to the day when His promised King would bring lasting peace. Isaiah announced this good news long before Jesus: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news... of peace and salvation" (Isa. 52:7). Peace was good news because it meant that God was coming to rescue His people, restore what sin had broken, and reign as their King. Sin fractured our relationship with God, with one another, within ourselves, and even with creation. But in Jesus, God's work of restoring shalom broke into the world in a new way. Paul says that Christ "is our peace" (Eph. 2:14), and in Colossians he explains that God reconciled all things to Himself by "making peace through His blood, shed on the cross" (Col. 1:20). Peace is not something we achieve on our own. It is a gift Christ secured for us through the cross.

God's plan has always been to restore the shalom that was lost in Eden, and the fruit of the Spirit is evidence that this restoration has already begun. Augustine captured this when he wrote, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You." We all long for peace, but lasting peace is not found in easier circumstances or fewer problems. It is found in Christ, who restores us to the God for whom we were created. Through Jesus, we have **peace with God**. And that peace begins to shape the way we live. Every time we forgive, pursue peace in a relationship, care for someone in need, speak truth with love, welcome the outsider, or serve without expecting something in return, we reflect God's restoring work. The peace the Spirit produces in us now points us toward the perfect shalom we will one day enjoy forever.

Reflection

When you think of peace, do you picture calm circumstances or God's restoring presence? Where is God inviting you to experience His shalom today? How does knowing you already have peace with God change the way you face today's challenges? Thank God for the gift of reconciliation through Jesus and ask Him to grow His peace in you.

Day 2 – Peace With God leads to the Peace of God

ROMANS 5:1–2; JOHN 14:23–27; PHILIPPIANS 4:4–9

Every person longs for peace, but the peace we often pursue depends on our circumstances. We imagine that if life were less stressful, relationships were easier, or the future felt more certain, we would finally have peace. Jesus offers a peace that remains steady even when life is not. **Before we can experience the peace of God, we must first receive the peace with God** that we talked about earlier this week. Because of sin, we were separated from God, unable to restore that relationship on our own. Yet through Christ's death and resurrection, we have been reconciled to the Father. Paul writes, "Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us." (Rom. 5:1). This peace is God's gracious gift, secured once and for all through the cross. Because we belong to Christ, we no longer live under shame, but we can walk in the security of His grace. Jesus told His disciples, "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid." (Jn 14:27). Jesus did not promise an easy life. Still, He did promise that through the Holy Spirit, the peace of God is available to everyone who puts their faith in Him.

Paul urges believers to bring every anxiety to God in prayer. As we tell God what we need and thank Him for what He has done, "then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:7). God's peace does not remove our struggles, but it guards our hearts and minds in the midst of them. N. T. Wright describes this peace as "*a settled trust in God's fatherly care and a steady refusal to give in to anxieties.*" It is not pretending everything is fine, but continually turning our fears into prayers and entrusting them to the One who is faithful. The peace of God flows from the assurance that we already belong to Him. As we rest in Christ's finished work, the Holy Spirit forms within us a quiet confidence that is not shaken by changing circumstances. This peace becomes a powerful witness to a world that desperately needs to have a "settled trust", pointing others to the only One who can truly satisfy the human heart.

Reflection

What anxiety do I need to surrender to God in prayer today? How would my relationships change if I truly believed I already have peace with God? Where might God be preparing me to become an instrument of His peace?

This prayer is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi; pray it over your life today.

"Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy."

Day 3 – Can’t We All Just Get Along?

EPHESIANS 4:1–3, COLOSSIANS 3:12–15; ROMANS 12:17–21, ROMANS 14

If biblical peace meant everyone getting along, the New Testament would look very different. The early churches had plenty of disagreements. The question was not whether conflict would come, but how followers of Jesus would respond when it did. Christopher J. H. Wright writes, “Since God has made peace between himself and us, God now calls us to live in peace with one another, as a way of ‘living out’ the transforming power of the cross in our own practical lives.” Because Christ has reconciled us to God, we are called to become people who pursue reconciliation with others. Paul urges believers to “make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace” (Eph. 4:3). Christ has already made us one through the cross, and we are called to protect that unity through humility, gentleness, patience, and love. This begins with the mindset of Christ, who humbled Himself and put the interests of others before His own (Phil. 2:1–5). Paul also writes, “Let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace” (Col. 3:15). **When conflict comes, Christ’s peace should shape the way we respond.**

We are called to be peacemakers. Romans 12:18 says, “Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.” Reconciliation is not always possible because it depends on more than one person. We are responsible to do what we can to pursue peace with humility, forgiveness, and grace, but we cannot control another person’s response, and we must trust the outcome to God. There is also an important difference between being a **peacemaker** and simply being a **peacekeeper**. Peacekeepers often avoid hard conversations or ignore problems to keep everyone comfortable. Peacemakers are willing to address conflict with love, speak truth with grace, apologize, forgive, and work toward real reconciliation. Romans 14 reminds us that believers can disagree on secondary matters and still remain united in Christ. Peace grows when we value people more than our preferences and care more about building one another up than winning an argument.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer observed, “The person who loves their dream of community will destroy community, but the person who loves those around them will create community.” Real peace requires loving imperfect people. The Spirit grows peace in us as we stop avoiding conflict, become quicker to apologize, resist the need to defend ourselves, and refuse divisive speech. In a world marked by polarization, avoidance, and a desire to “protect our peace,” a life shaped by Christ’s peace stands out. Every time we choose humility over pride, forgiveness over bitterness, or reconciliation over division, we give others a glimpse of the Prince of Peace.

Reflection

Am I more concerned with being right or with reflecting Christ? Is there someone I need to forgive, seek forgiveness from, or pursue reconciliation with? How can I demonstrate Christ’s peace in a world that desperately needs it this week?

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Week 5

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: PATIENCE

PATIENCE (Makrothymia)

To be long-tempered in suffering, waiting in calmness, and able to put up with frustration.

"The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent." - 2 Peter 3:9

Day 1 – Patience– The Long Nose

2 PETER 3:9, JAMES 5:7-11, MICAH 7:18-20

At this point in our study, you have probably begun to realize that the fruit of the Spirit are not the way we traditionally view them. These were uniquely Greek terms that were not virtue-based, but tangible markers of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts and lives. They are meant to be active works, not simply feelings or emotions we possess towards God and others. The fruit of patience, or **makrothymia**, really showcases this uniqueness when we begin to understand what it meant and represented to the early Jewish and Christian people.

Take a look at how BibleProject defines this fruit and reflect upon it today.

"Imagine someone with a nose stretched out like a flute, or perhaps an elephant's trunk. This bizarre picture can help us visualize the idiom "long of nostrils," which is a key image in the Hebrew Bible that represents patience. But what does "long of nostrils" have to do with being patient? Like cartoon characters with smoke shooting out of their ears, in the ancient Hebrew imagination, smoking anger comes out of a person's nose. And having long nostrils means that the angry smoke takes longer to appear. In other words, that person doesn't immediately act in anger.

So the Hebrew idiom "long of nostrils" is often translated as "slow to anger" (see Exod. 34:6; Prov. 15:18), and early Greek translators used the root *makrothum*, or "patient," to communicate the idea. The New Testament says God is patient in bringing judgment because he is "not wanting for any to perish, but for all to move to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9, BibleProject Translation). **As God's Spirit helps us see others like God does, we can find strength to also treat people with divine patience.**

Rather than exploding with judgment or anger, we can participate with God and cultivate the spiritual fruit of patience, extending mercy to all, forgiving, and supporting people as they grow."

- BibleProject- *The Fruit of the Spirit (and Its Meaning) in the Bible*

Reflection

What is something that stands out to you as unique about this term of patience (makrothymia)? How have you been viewing or approaching patience in a way that is simpler than it is intended to be? Pray and ask the Lord to help open your heart to this fruit of the Spirit and its depths in your study this week.

Day 2 – The Communal Nature of Patience

1 THESSALONIANS 5:14, EPHESIANS 4:2, 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4, COLOSSIANS 3:12-13

Have you ever thought about patience as communal? Probably not. When it comes to the fruit of the Spirit, we typically are thinking about it from the perspective of how the Spirit is solely working in us, but the Spirit not only works in the Christian heart, but also in the communal Church's heart. The work of the fruit of the Spirit should impact our individual lives, but also **the Church as a collective**. The idea of patience becomes even more necessary and urgent when we realize that the Church, as an image-bearing community, benefits and grows as we allow the fruit of the Spirit to reign in our hearts and shape the way we live with one another.

"We need to also recognise the communal nature of patience. Makrothymia in the New Testament is predominantly not about resisting impatience in order to sustain one's own peace of mind but rather to build up a harmonious community. In 1 Thess 5:14, Paul urges the believers to "be patient with everyone," and Eph 4:2 combines patience with love ("be patient, bearing with one another in love") in the same way as 1 Cor 13:4 does: "love is patient." Finally, Col 3:12-13 also emphasises the need to forgive: "Clothe yourselves with... patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone." Winward (Stephen F. Winward) captures the essence of such forbearance well when he considers it "an aspect of caring; it's one of the colours in the spectrum of love. It's the way in which a loving person responds to, and deals with, trying and difficult people."

- Zoltán Dörnyei, *The Psychology of the Fruit of the Spirit*

Reflection

Reflect on a time when a member of the community showed you patience or when you saw a church or community collectively demonstrating this makrothymia patience. After this time of reflection, answer this question: how might my church and community benefit by my submission to the Spirit in patience?

Day 3 – Practice Patience, Practice Grace

JAMES 5:10, JONAH CHAPTERS 1-4, 2 PETER 3:9

Jonah is one of the richest of all of the minor prophetic books of the Old Testament in applicable spiritual knowledge. Jonah has so many lessons about justice and mercy, but what few realize is how closely tied the story of Jonah is to God's clear demonstration of His patience. The vehicle that God uses for mercy, compassion, and love for not only Jonah, but the entire civilization of Nineveh is His patience. After Jonah has run, sailed, and done all he could do to get away from doing what God has called him to do, he finally goes to pronounce judgment and destruction on Nineveh. After God sees the Ninevites' grief and repentance, though, it says he "changed his mind" (3:10).

Jonah is not here for this at all. He goes and pouts and then explodes in rage against the Lord. In Jonah 4:2-3, we see Jonah acknowledge this fundamental piece of God's character: His patience. *"I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people. Just kill me now, Lord!"* Woah! That escalated quickly. "You're so patient! It's driving me crazy!" How does Jonah know that God is merciful, compassionate, slow to get angry (patient), and full of unfailing love? Because God has already shown Him all of these things when he rebelled against God.

Mercy and grace are two characteristics that God possesses that we don't need a lot of explaining to wrap our minds around when we are the personal recipients. Thank God He is patient with us! But what about when God calls us to exercise that for others? What about when God calls us to be patient with others? What if that patience means long-suffering? Now that is a different chore altogether. Throughout Scripture we can see that God is patient with us. He shows His patience through His grace, mercy, and love towards us. We are drawn to this piece of God's character. This should become the defining piece of our character too. If the Spirit is truly working in our saved, grace-bought, and patiently secured hearts, then we should be patient with those around us. That means that we are actively patient even (and especially!) with those who don't deserve it, and those who, when we exercise it, make us feel like we're suffering. **Patience is the vehicle of grace, compassion, and love** that Christ uses on creation, and it is meant to be the vehicle we use with His creation too. Remember, the patience of the Lord manifests in the person and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When we turn our eyes to Him, which the Holy Spirit leads us to do, we see what patience truly is.

Reflection

Who do you struggle to show this kind of patience with? Why? Reflect on the ways God has been patient with you. Be really honest with yourself and God about these areas and times. Now, when you have spent time reflecting upon His patience for you, how do you feel towards being patient with others?

Week 6

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: KINDNESS



KINDNESS (Chrēstotēs)

Generously providing for another person's benefit.

"Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes." - Psalm 37:7

Day 1 – Similar but Distinct

ROMANS 12, 1 PETER 2:9-10

Some fruit of the Spirit are typically grouped together because they are so similar, but Paul wasn't just listing synonymous terms to describe the fruit of the Spirit. Each term is unique and intentional even if they may share a great deal in common. This is the case with kindness. Often, kindness and goodness are combined in studies of the fruit of the Spirit. That is because kindness, or **chrēstotēs**, means roughly "**active goodness**" (defined by BibleProject). In other words, kindness is the act of doing good for your fellow man, whereas goodness, or agathone, refers more to acting in a way that reflects God (right, pure). Goodness should lead to kindness. They work together in the dance of the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

This week, though, we are going to focus on just the Fruit of the Spirit: kindness. We're going to look at how this fruit should uniquely impact our hearts and interactions with God's creation.

As we begin this week, begin by reflecting on the importance of this fruit by understanding how deeply tied it is to the Christian life, and even to our name. Zoltán Dörnyei in his book *The Psychology of the Fruit of the Spirit* points out, "Interestingly, the similarity between the Greek word for Christ (*Christos*) and kindness (*chrēstos*) often confused people in NT times, and Christians were referred to as the latter, because they were seen as kind."

Don't dismiss how important kindness is; don't try to group it with other fruit of the Spirit or virtues. It may be similar to others, but they're not synonymous. **Kindness should define how the world sees the Christian, because the Christian should clearly be able to see the Lord's kindness and seek to reflect it in their life.**

Reflection

Reflect and possibly journal these questions: What is a kindness someone has shown to you lately? What made it so kind? How does kindness lead you to reflect on Christ?

Day 2 – Kindness is Character

1 JOHN 3:11-18, EPHESIANS 4:20-32

Kindness has many different facets. We immediately think of kindness as a positive word, a polite exchange, a smile. These are all basic means of kindness that we can give to others, but the action of kindness should play itself out in more than just a word or gesture. Kindness should be acts of generosity we give to others with no expectation of reward, recognition, or even duty. Kindness should ultimately become a character trait that you do, not out of obligation or duty, but out of an abundance of love and an understanding of the agapé love that leads the charge of the fruit of the Spirit.

Christopher J.H. Wright explains it this way, "Kind deeds are done by people who are themselves kind by nature and character. **Kindness, in other words, is not just a term to describe actions, but a characteristic that describes people**—people who habitually behave in a way that blesses and benefits others because that is their character." Again, we are drawn to the reminder that the fruit of the Spirit are not merely works of virtue we execute, but should become traits of our Christian character. The fruit of the Spirit should ultimately be who we are, not just what we do.

When we draw our eyes to King Jesus, we see that the fruit of the Spirit are actions executed by Him to us, but far greater than that, these are the traits of His very character. This is true for every fruit of the Spirit, but it is especially true around the fruit of love, kindness, and goodness. These traits define Him so deeply, and should do the same for us.

Reflection

Write down 1 John 3:18. Reflect upon the passage. Underline or highlight the words that stand out to you most. Embrace that we are children whose spiritual and visible character is being shaped by our willingness to listen and submit to our Father. Ask God to shape your character around the way that He has shown kindness to you.

Day 3 – Kindness is What We Do for Jesus

PROVERBS 14:31, PROVERBS 19:17, MATTHEW 25:34-40

Proverbs, one of the books of the bible that we call wisdom literature, explains that kindness is something we do for the Lord. Make sure to read those Proverbs passages listed above, but the idea of the fruit of the Spirit also being a gift we give forth to the Lord, almost an offering of our own love to Him, is a powerful concept. We don't regularly reflect upon this truth enough, but we really should. There is nothing you can give to the Lord to *earn* His favor or salvation, but there is much you can give to Him to honor and praise Him.

The entire idea around giving your life to the Lord by receiving His salvation is just that, a living sacrifice where we give and pour out to Him. We should regularly reflect upon and exercise the character traits of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives as a means of honoring Him and drawing others to His name. One of the clearest ways we give back to the Lord, as the Proverbs say, is to show kindness. To actively be kind to His creation is to actively point back to Him. **When we activate kindness, we reflect Christ for others, and we honor our Lord.**

Jesus makes this point even clearer when He speaks to His disciples. He tells them that what we, His people, do on earth for "the least of these" we are actually doing for Him. In other words, what we do for His image-bearers we do for Him. All of creation, no matter how lowly or sinful it seems or is, is the image-bearers of God. We are all created from the Creator, and when we see Him in His creation, we begin to naturally show them, show Him, the kindness His Spirit is working in us always.

Reflection

Have you ever thought of kindness as a way of honoring God? Have you ever thought about your lack of kindness being a way that you dishonor God? End your reflection on kindness this week by praying and asking God, in His kindness, to forgive your lack of kindness to Him and His people. Ask Him to help you begin to have a character that more reflects His. Thank Him for His great kindness as you end your prayer.

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Week 7

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: GOODNESS



GOODNESS (agathōsynē)

reflecting God's holy character by choosing what is right for His glory and the good of others.

"So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith." - Galatians 6:9-10

Day 1 – What Is Biblical Goodness?

PSALM 136, PSALM 34:8-22, MICAH 6:4-8, JAMES 1:16-18

Today, the word good can feel almost ordinary. We call someone a good neighbor, a good friend, or a good person. But biblical goodness begins not with us, but with God. Scripture reminds us that God alone is **perfectly good**, and everything He does flows from His holy, righteous, and loving character. As the psalmist says, "Taste and see that the LORD is good" (Ps. 34:8). James 1:17 also reminds us that "whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father." Before we can reflect goodness, we first have to know the **goodness of our Heavenly Father**.

When Paul lists goodness as part of the fruit of the Spirit, he uses the Greek word *agathōsynē*. It has the sense of doing what is right, living with integrity, and using what we have for the good of others. Goodness and kindness are closely related, but they are not quite the same. Kindness is often gentle and compassionate. **Goodness is willing to do the right thing even when it is uncomfortable or hard.** Sometimes kindness looks like comforting someone, while goodness may mean lovingly telling the truth. Both matter, and together they help us reflect the character of Christ.

Long before Paul wrote about the fruit of the Spirit, God showed His people what goodness looks like through the prophet Micah. In a time of injustice and empty religious ritual, God reminded them that He wanted more than outward acts of worship. He wanted lives that reflected His character: "the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic. 6:8). Biblical goodness is not simply avoiding what is wrong. It is actively choosing what reflects God's character: integrity over compromise, generosity over selfishness, truth over convenience, and faithfulness over comfort. Because the fruit of the Spirit reflects God's own character, His goodness becomes more visible in us as the Spirit transforms our hearts. This is not about trying harder to be a "good person." As we surrender to the Holy Spirit, our desires and habits begin to align with God's will. And the gospel reminds us that our goodness is not what saves us. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ. Goodness is the fruit of a life already being changed by Him.

Reflection

When you hear the word goodness, do you think of simply being nice or of reflecting God's character? How have you experienced God's goodness in your own life?

Psalm 107:1 says, *"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!" Take a moment today to thank God for the ways you have seen His goodness in your life.*

Day 2 – Goodness Overcomes Evil

GENESIS 50:20; ROMANS 12:9–21; ACTS 10:34–38; JOHN 10:11–18

Biblical goodness is not passive. It is choosing to do what is right, even when it costs us something. Instead of answering evil with revenge, goodness responds with truth, love, and faithful obedience. Joseph knew what this looked like. After years of betrayal, slavery, and imprisonment, he stood before the brothers who had sold him and said, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good” (Gen. 50:20). Joseph did not excuse their sin, but he also refused to let their sin determine his response. God redeemed what others meant for harm and used it to save many lives. From the beginning of Scripture, we see that God’s goodness is greater than the evil people can do.

We see this most clearly in Jesus. Peter sums up His ministry with these words: “Jesus went around doing good... for God was with him” (Acts 10:38). Jesus healed the sick, welcomed the outcast, defended the vulnerable, confronted hypocrisy, forgave sinners, and obeyed the Father. He also called Himself “the Good Shepherd” (John 10:11). The word used for good here is **kalos**, it carries the idea of something noble, beautiful, and excellent. Unlike a hired shepherd who runs from danger, Jesus willingly laid down His life for His sheep. **At the cross, humanity’s greatest act of evil became God’s greatest act of redemption.**

Paul writes, “Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good” (Rom. 12:21). This is about much more than simply being nice. It is about learning to **live like Jesus**. Every time we forgive instead of getting even, bless instead of curse, tell the truth instead of taking the easier way out, or choose generosity over selfishness, we show something of God’s goodness to the people around us. Zoltán Dörnyei explains that goodness grows as the Holy Spirit changes us from the inside out, replacing fear and selfishness with greater integrity and courage. N. T. Wright makes a similar point when he describes Christlike character as something formed through repeated, Spirit-led obedience. As we continue choosing to follow Jesus, goodness becomes less about forcing ourselves to behave better and more about becoming the kind of people who naturally reflect Him. Every day gives us opportunities to overcome evil with good. Most of us will never face what Joseph endured or sacrifice as Jesus did, but we are still invited to follow their example. As we choose holiness in our thoughts, words, and actions, the goodness of Christ becomes more visible in us.

Reflection

Goodness often means doing the right thing “even when it hurts.” Is there an area of your life where you are tempted to take the easy way out instead of choosing integrity? How is God calling you to overcome evil with good in your life?

Day 3 – Cultivating a Life of Goodness

GALATIANS 6:1-10; EPHESIANS 2:8-10; MATTHEW 5:13-16

Goodness is called a fruit because it grows from a living relationship with Christ. We cannot manufacture it through willpower or more effort. Instead, the Holy Spirit patiently cultivates God's character in us as we learn to walk in step with Him. While goodness is God's work in us, He does invite us to participate in that work through our daily obedience. Paul reminds us that God "saved you by his grace when you believed." (Eph. 2:8-9). Our good works do not earn God's love, but become our response to His love. We are "God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." (Eph. 2:10). The same grace that saves us also transforms us, shaping us into people who reflect God's goodness. This transformation is cultivated one choice at a time. **Spiritual growth happens as we consistently cooperate with the Holy Spirit.** The goal of spiritual formation is not simply making better decisions but becoming people whose character reflects Christ.

Galatians 6 paints a beautiful picture of this life, which comes right after Paul's words about the fruit of the Spirit. We cultivate goodness as we gently restore those who have fallen, carry one another's burdens, refuse to grow weary in doing good, and faithfully "live to please the Spirit." Most of these opportunities are ordinary and often unnoticed, yet they are precisely how the Holy Spirit shapes us. Christopher J.H. Wright reminds us that goodness is often expressed through telling the truth, honoring our commitments, showing generosity, seeking justice, serving those in need, and loving our neighbors well. These daily choices to move towards holiness are the natural overflow of a heart transformed by God's grace.

Jesus said, "Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. (Matt. 5:16). The purpose of goodness is never to draw attention to ourselves. Our lives become windows through which others catch a glimpse of God's goodness. In a world often marked by selfishness, dishonesty, and division, things like **quiet integrity**, **sacrificial love**, and **faithful obedience** become powerful witnesses to the transforming work of Christ. The Holy Spirit often forms Christlike character not through dramatic moments but through countless small choices of obedience. Every act of goodness points beyond ourselves to the God who is perfectly good.

Reflection

Where is God inviting you to put His goodness into action this week? Which area of your life most needs to reflect greater integrity, love, courage, or obedience? How might your everyday choices help others experience the goodness of God?

End this week by listening to the song, "Goodness of God". Reflect on the lyrics and write out a prayer of gratitude for His goodness.

[illegible]

Week 8

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: FAITHFULNESS

FAITHFULNESS (pistis)

Steadfast trust and loyal devotion to God that by the work of the Spirit grows into a life of dependable obedience and perseverance.

"Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful."

- 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Day 1 – God is Faithful

DEUTERONOMY 7:6–12, LAMENTATIONS 3:22–33, 1 CORINTHIANS 1:4–9

The Greek word translated “faithfulness” in Galatians 5:22 is **pistis**. Most often, it means faith or trust, but it can also carry the idea of faithfulness, dependability, and loyal devotion. Those ideas belong together. Biblical faith is not just believing true things about God. It is trusting Him enough that our lives begin to reflect that trust. In that sense, faith leads to faithfulness.

But **before faithfulness is something the Spirit produces in us, it is something God shows us about Himself**. All through Scripture, God keeps His promises, stays true to His covenant, and remains faithful to His people. Moses reminded Israel, “The LORD your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and lavishes his unfailing love on those who love him and obey his commands” (Deut. 7:9). Even when His people were unfaithful, God did not stop being faithful.

Jeremiah held onto that truth in one of the darkest moments in Israel’s story. With Jerusalem in ruins, he could still say, “The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning” (Lam. 3:22–23). God’s faithfulness does not rise and fall with our circumstances. He is faithful in seasons of joy, disappointment, waiting, and uncertainty. Paul later reminded the church in Corinth of the same thing: their confidence rested in God, “for he is faithful to do what he says” (1 Cor. 1:9).

In many ways, the whole story of Scripture is a story of God keeping His promises. From Abraham to Moses to David and finally to Jesus, God continually proves that He can be trusted. In Christ, **God fulfilled the promises** He had been making all along. As N. T. Wright points out, the gospel is the clearest picture of God’s faithfulness because He did for His people what they could never do for themselves.

That is why faithfulness begins with God, not with us. As we learn to trust His character, the Holy Spirit makes us more dependable, more loyal, and more willing to keep following Jesus even when it is hard. Our faithfulness grows as we learn to trust the One who has never stopped being faithful.

Reflection

Where have you seen God’s faithfulness in your own life? Is there an area where you are struggling to trust Him right now? How does remembering God’s faithfulness in Scripture help you trust Him today?

Day 2 – Faithfulness Doesn’t Mean Perfection

HEBREWS 11, JAMES 2:14–26, LUKE 22:39–46

When we think about faithfulness, we may picture someone who never struggles, never doubts, and never gets it wrong. But that is not really the picture Scripture gives us. Faithfulness is not about being flawless. It is about **continuing to trust God**, even when we are weak, afraid, or unsure. Hebrews 11 is often called the “Hall of Faith,” but it is really a story of imperfect people learning to trust a faithful God. Abraham struggled to understand God’s promise. Sarah laughed when she heard she would have a son. Moses wrestled with fear and anger. Rahab had a complicated past. David’s life included both deep faith and serious failure. These people were not remembered because they got everything right. They were remembered because, again and again, they chose to trust God and believe that He would keep His promises.

James reminds us that real faith does not stay in our heads. “Faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless” (James 2:17). Trust eventually shows up in the way we live. If we really believe God is who He says He is, that belief begins to shape our choices, our relationships, and the way we respond when obedience costs us something. Faith and faithfulness belong together. Jesus gives us the clearest picture of this. In the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing what was ahead, He prayed, “Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine” (Luke 22:42). Jesus did not hide His sorrow or pretend obedience was easy. He was honest about His anguish, and still He surrendered Himself to the Father’s will. His faithfulness was not the absence of struggle. It was choosing obedience in the middle of it. And He remained faithful all the way to the cross.

Walking by the Spirit works much the same way in our lives. Faithfulness is usually not one dramatic moment of obedience. More often, it is a lifetime of small choices to trust God again and again. **Faithfulness does not require perfection.** It requires a heart that keeps turning back to God, even after failure. We grow in faithfulness as we stop depending on our own strength and keep surrendering ourselves to the Spirit. We will fail. We will have moments of fear and doubt. But faithfulness means turning back toward God, trusting His grace, and taking the next obedient step. The God who has always been faithful to us is patiently teaching us to become faithful too.

Reflection

Have you ever believed that your failures disqualify you from being faithful? Where in your life do you need to pray, “Not my will, but Yours be done”? What is one step of faithful obedience God may be asking you to take today?

Day 3 – A Faithful Life

HEBREWS 12:1–3, COLOSSIANS 1:9–14, 2 TIMOTHY 4:6–8, REVELATION 2:10

Faithfulness is called a fruit because it grows over time. We cannot force it through willpower. The Holy Spirit forms it in us as we learn to trust God and keep following Him. Hebrews 12 gives us a picture of this kind of life: “Let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus” (Heb. 12:1–2). Faithfulness grows as we keep taking the next step, even when the road is hard.

The Christian life is not a sprint. It is a **long race**, and faithfulness is built through steady obedience over time. We lay aside what distracts us, keep going through hardship, and fix our eyes on Jesus. He not only shows us what faithfulness looks like, but He gives us the strength to keep going. Paul prayed for the Colossian church that they would be “strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need” (Col. 1:11). Endurance is not something we have to come up with on our own. God supplies what we need.

Near the end of his life, Paul could say, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful” (2 Tim. 4:7). That kind of faithfulness was not built in one dramatic moment, but through years of trusting God again and again. Jesus gives the same encouragement in Revelation: “If you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). Faithfulness is less about impressive accomplishments and more about staying devoted to Christ over a lifetime. As Eugene Petersen says, it’s a **“long obedience in the same direction.”**

Christopher J.H. Wright points out that faithfulness often looks very ordinary: keeping our promises, loving our families well, serving faithfully in our churches, honoring Christ in our work, and continuing to trust God in both joy and suffering. These choices may not seem dramatic, but they matter. The world often celebrates talent, success, and achievement, but God delights in a faithful heart. As the Spirit keeps working in us, our lives begin to reflect the faithfulness of the One we follow.

Reflection

Choose one ordinary act of faithfulness to practice each day. It could be reading Scripture before checking your phone, praying for a specific person, encouraging someone, keeping a promise, or serving without needing recognition. Pay attention to what God does through that small, faithful choice.

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Week 9

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: GENTLENESS

GENTLENESS (prautes)

To respond tenderly or softly with an attitude of humility.

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere." – James 3:17

Day 1 – Gentleness– Mercy After the Fall

COLOSSIANS 3:12, GALATIANS 6:1-3, MATTHEW 26:69-75 AND JOHN 21:15-17

Gentleness could probably be most closely associated with humility. It is a response that is calm, considerate, tender, and measured, but it is also closely tied to self-control and patience. This is clear when we read Paul's writing in Colossians chapter three verse twelve, where each of these is listed together, but again, like the other Fruit of the Spirit, gentleness is unique from these traits. Their difference lies, as we have seen with most of the Fruit of the Spirit, as gentleness is lived out in action.

Humility is an inward heart posture. It is based on how you see others and yourself. It's a challenge of perception. Gentleness, on the other hand, is the outward expression of the humble heart. In other words, humility is of the heart; gentleness is the response. The question is: how do we express a humble heart with gentleness?

I was watching Dancing with the Stars: The Next Pro the other day. In this particular episode, one of the dancers fell during the competition. I was certain that the judges were going to really give it to this contestant, and maybe go ahead and eliminate him. Instead, as soon as the routine was over, the judges asked, "Are you okay?" and then followed up by telling him not to worry about it. They encouraged him by saying as a dancer, you will fall at some point, but the key is to get back up and keep going. The gentleness and care in their response struck me.

To be gentle with someone is to see them as human, as an image-bearer of God. Gentleness is meeting someone, wherever they are and whatever they've done, with a response of calmness, consideration, and tenderness. To be gentle is to love another with an attitude of care and kindness actively all rolled into one. This is exactly what Paul is encouraging the church in Galatia to do when approaching those who have sinned. **To be gentle is to show the merciful posture Christ shows to us, the ones who sin, fall short, and fail daily.** As Christians, we will all fall. When we fall, may we be surrounded by those with humble hearts and a gentle posture, and may we respond the same when others fall.

Reflection

Gentleness is something we see as Jesus' default response to mistakes. In one of the greatest examples, Peter denies Christ three times when He is on trial. When Jesus returns, Jesus faces Peter and does not shout him down or rebuke him with fists and aggression, but gently asks him three times: "Do you love me?" He restores him with gentleness. Who do you need to restore with gentleness today? Don't hesitate to show this gentle mercy to others. Christ certainly doesn't hesitate to show it to you.

Day 2 – Gentle is the Way of Jesus

JOHN 8:1-11, MARK 15:1-15

Jesus demonstrated His ability to speak and preach. He showcased His ability to heal, calm storms, and perform miracles. He even demonstrated His ability to righteously get angry and remove those who try to distract or hinder those who come to worship (Mark 11:15-17). Jesus had a wide range of responses and emotions, and each of those responses and emotions was completely reigned in and righteous in their execution. Of course Jesus can speak in long-form and never stumble into exaggeration or embellishment. Of course what He says is always true. Of course He can see those hurting or in need around Him and not roll His eyes, but instead heal them. Of course He can get angry and even have a strong, passionate response without letting it carry Him into sin. This is the perfect Son of God after all.

We aren't as good at exercising these things. We're human. We're fallible. We're prideful. We're sinful. Our best intentions to teach, to help, and to correct can get carried away into sin, yet there is a virtue that naturally restrains many of these temptations: gentleness. Gentleness slows our anger, softens our pride, tempers our speech, and teaches us to regard others with humility and patience. Jesus' gentleness is one of the most unique and appealing traits of His character. Gentleness was one of the most defining qualities of Jesus' life and ministry. We see this so clearly in His defense of a woman caught in adultery and in His trial before Pilate. Even when Jesus had the power to defend and rescue Himself, He chose gentleness. Jesus displayed His gentleness most clearly as it led Him to the cross. Even when he could have defended Himself, condemned His accusers, or called upon legions of angels, He chose humility, restraint, and obedience.

We live in a time and society where the virtues of silencing others, dismissing others, belittling, and interrupting are celebrated as verbal victories. When we disagree deeply with the way someone is living, voting, speaking, or believing we are culturally encouraged to shut them down. This is not the way of Jesus. Jesus was not known for how loud and dismissive He was but how gentle and present He was. There's more weight in a simple word that is spoken gently and clothed in love than in a shout online or a dismissive verbal takedown. **Gentleness is strength under control.** To carry and be marked by the fruit of the Spirit means to be gentle in how you see and interact with others; it means to be under the control of the Spirit.

Reflection

Read the passages for today. Reflect on what stands out about Jesus' display of gentleness. After you have done this, reflect upon these questions: What tempts you to be gentle? What robs you of gentleness? How can we cultivate gentleness in place of dismissiveness or aggressiveness?

Day 3 – God, The Gentle Father

1 CORINTHIANS 8:6, EPHESIANS 4:6, MATTHEW 23:9, PSALM 68:5,
PSALM 103:13, MATTHEW 6:9-13

The Fruit of the Spirit are the characteristics of God. To live out the fruit of the Spirit is to no less reflect the very character of God. We cannot end our commentary on gentleness without drawing our eyes to the Father, God. There is no coincidence in His name as Father. A righteous and loving parent is gentle. A good parent should exhibit each fruit of the Spirit when interacting, raising, playing, even disciplining their children (that's right, even discipline and correction are possible and necessary with gentleness). Now how that gentleness is executed is vital. This gentleness should always be the gentleness that is brought by the Spirit, not the dismissive, passive kind we see far too often in how culture defines gentleness.

Biblical gentleness does not mean avoiding boundaries, correction, or consequences. A gentle parent can be both tender and firm, because true gentleness seeks the good and growth of the child, not simply keeping the child from experiencing discomfort. A parent who executes the gentleness that the Spirit provides reflects the gentleness of our Heavenly Father. The Lord is gentle and tender in the way He parents us, His children, but throughout Scripture we see that He is still firm, and that there are real consequences when it is necessary to correct and direct His children. He is always merciful, too. He is always demonstrating His gentleness, even in His discipline. He is showing love and mercy, even when we deserve none of it. Through His gentle discipline, He shows us correction and love in unity. Through God's discipline, we really learn, and we especially learn and see what true gentleness looks like. This is the kind of gentle parent we are called to be.

How often do we really think of God in this way though? How often do we see and interact with God as our Father? To miss or not regularly reflect upon God as our Father is to miss out on the experience and understanding of His gentleness. Scripture states over and over and over again that God is our Father. Who else but a righteous Father would show such kindness, mercy, love, and forgiveness to us? He is gentle to all, especially to His children. **God is the gentle Father, and when we reflect regularly upon this, we begin to be raised like children that can proudly reflect their loving parent.**

Reflection

Reflect on this: how has the Lord revealed Himself as the gentle Father to you? He does this every day. Go back and re-read the listed passages above. After each reading, take time to pray to this gentle Father, and ask Him that you might begin to see Him this way, and reflect this quality of His in your own life.

[illegible]

Week 10

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: SELF-CONTROL

SELF-CONTROL (enkrateia)

To have power/mastery over one's emotions, passions, and actions

"for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." – 2 Timothy 1:7 ESV

Day 1 – The Foundation of all Virtue

GALATIANS 5:24-26

If love is the foundation of the fruit of the Spirit, then self-control is the discipline that shapes how every other virtue is expressed. The fruit of the Spirit is the outward expression of the Spirit's work within us, the visible mark of God's presence in our lives. Self-control is the discipline that trains our hearts to walk in those virtues consistently. Without discipline, there is chaos, impulsiveness, and reckless living. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, self-control takes root in our hearts, allowing the other fruits of the Spirit to flourish.

Look at how Zoltan Dörnyei points to the importance of self-control in his book *The Psychology of the Fruit of the Spirit*.

Taking the final position in the list of the facets of the fruit of the Spirit, self-control has a privileged place, because the final position in a Greek structure implies special emphasis. Most commentators agree...that this conspicuous placement was intentional, putting self-control in juxtaposition to love at the other end of the list...This is a point where ancient philosophy and modern psychology come to full agreement. A good illustration of the high esteem attributed to self-control in antiquity is Xenophon's summary of the views of his teacher, Socrates: "Shall not every man hold self-control to be the foundation of all virtue, and first lay this foundation firmly in his soul? For who without this can learn any good or practice it worthily?"...self-control is centrally involved in most virtues and can be understood as a kind of "moral muscle."...self-control can be said to be the master virtue."

- Zoltán Dörnyei *The Psychology of the Fruit of the Spirit*

Reflection

Where do you feel you lack self-control? Is it in your tongue? Your passions? Your desires? Your ambitions? Really think through where your life feels out of control, and then surrender those things to the Lord. Ask Him to take control and to help you walk in the control of His Holy Spirit.

Day 2 – Self-Control is the Path to Real Freedom

GALATIANS 5, 2 PETER 1:5-9

Let's go back to the beginning. Remember where Paul is coming from in sharing the fruit of the Spirit with the churches in Galatia? He is writing to churches and a society that was debating whether they were to become Jewish-practicing Christ-followers (beholden to and reflective of Torah-living Jews) or to be fully law-free Christians (no longer held to the standards of the previous laws because of Jesus' sacrifice). Paul's answer was neither legalism nor lawlessness, but instead life exercised in the fruit of the Spirit. Self-control is this perfect fruit that sums up the point Paul was trying to make: the way the Christian is called to live is both free and beholden to the Law (the ways of God).

In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul lists anti-fruit of the Spirit. This list is what Christopher J.H. Wright describes as "human nature *out of control* and at its sinful, excessive worst." The fruit of the Spirit are meant to keep these anti-fruit in check. Self-control is meant to be one of the pivotal pieces to fighting these anti-fruit. Self-control stands out from the other fruit in that it is a uniquely human fruit of the Spirit. God is always in full control because of His holiness, goodness, and perfection. This fruit of the Spirit is one that we, as those who are sinful, corrupt, and broken, need to utilize each moment of each day. Self-control is a strong trait for Paul to have highlighted for the church in Galatia because self-control is the discipline that can exercise both our freedom while openly and willingly subjecting ourselves to the direction and law of God.

Often we think of the negativity of something like discipline and self-control. It is a denial of self. We may even view it as limiting our freedom, but as we can see when we meditate upon all of the fruit of the Spirit, these are not works that limit our freedom, but truly help us embrace it. The anti-fruit of the Spirit is what robs us of our true freedom, but the fruit of the Spirit breaks us free. **The fruit of the Spirit offers us a real freedom we find nowhere else.** This is the whole point that Paul is making in Galatians 5. Galatians 5:1, "So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law." Real freedom is found in real love, real patience, real goodness, real kindness, real gentleness, real joy, real peace, real faithfulness, and of course, real self-control.

Reflection

Reflect, maybe even journal, through these questions: How important is freedom to you? Have you viewed self-control or discipline as a limit to your freedom? Why? Where do you feel tension to deny yourself? Why? How might denying yourself (self-control) actually usher in the freedom that God offers, as we read about in Galatians 5:1?

Day 3 – From Noun, to Verb, to Adjective

GALATIANS 5

There's a desire to look at Galatians 5:22-23 (The fruit of the Spirit) through a cultural and secular lens of a list of virtues only. "Here are 9 actions that should dictate my life. I'll start trying to do these." We may think and feel this when we read this list in Galatians 5, and there is some real nobility to that, but there's also some ignorance and real obvious failure ahead. If the Fruit of the Spirit are the things *you do* (mere rules or spiritual laws), then they will become the things *you fail at* and begin to resent.

The fruit of the Spirit is just what we've pointed to over and over again in this study, the fruit that the Holy Spirit grows in the open, submissive Christian heart. Let's look at it this way: the fruit of the Spirit are presented as nouns in the Greek. They are nouns because they describe what the Holy Spirit produces within us. As the Spirit works in us, they should be expressed in our lives as verbs because they should shape what we do, and ultimately these virtues should become adjectives that describe the person we are becoming. **The fruit of the Spirit are the workings of the Holy Spirit in us, shaping us, and leading us to execute His image and will in creation.** All of this, though, is only possible at the behest and working of the Spirit in our lives.

What does this mean for us then? It means we need to have a life that is in the ultimate control of the Holy Spirit. To be self-controlled, in other words, is that your self is controlled by the power and direction of the Holy Spirit. The other things of life that attempt to take control- our passions, our desires, ambitions, fears, pride, emotions- are under the control of the Holy Spirit. As Paul is pointing out earlier in Galatians 5, our sexual desires, our attempts to find life outside of Christ, our aggression, our selfishness, our vices, our division, are placed under control, under His authority, and are purified when we have the self-control to be under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Reflection

For this final reflection, there are no questions to ponder, no passages to journal, and no action to do outside of simply sitting in silence for an extended period of time (longer than you may be comfortable with) and asking the Spirit to work in and through you. Let the fruit of the Spirit work in and through your heart and into your life through your surrender to the Spirit now and forevermore. End your time by going back to page 4 and pray the prayer that began this study.



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What Now?

The fruit of the Spirit is not exhaustive. These are not the only ways to live in the Spirit and walk towards spiritual maturity and conformity to the ways of Christ. There is more there. What is it? It's found in the pages of Scripture. The dedication to give your time, your thought power, your attention to the Word of God is a powerful means of surrender.

What we just took part in over the last eleven weeks was not a spiritual-virtue boot camp by studying the fruit of the Spirit, but instead it was a practice of surrender and study of God's Word. So what do we do now? We keep going back to His Word. The fruit of the Word of God should take root in our hearts, and we should allow it to grow through the nurturing waters of our returning attention and passion for it. Keep reading, studying, and falling in love with Christ through the regular reading and study of His Word. Need help finding something else to read and study in your bible? Reach out to us at grace@graceclarksville.com. We'd love to share new ways to let the fruit of the Spirit take hold.

Our specific prayer for this study:

*God, I pray that I may be aware of Your presence and of the Spirit working in my life. Today, help me abide in You so that Your fruit grows naturally in my life. **Fill me with Your love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.** Shape my heart to become more like Yours in the way I think, speak, and love others. Help me depend on Your strength instead of my own. Unite us as a church family, and use us to shine the light of Christ in our homes, workplaces, schools, and community. May our words, attitudes, and actions point others to You. We cannot do this in our own strength. We depend on You. Holy Spirit, let Your fruit be evident in my life. **Amen.***

