FRUIT FULL

by Bill Rasco
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Introduction

The Fruit of the Spirit is a list that the Apostle Paul gives to a group of struggling churches in the Roman province of Galatia. It is meant to help them judge truth from false teaching, stand firm in faith, and experience the transformation that God is working in His people. It is a call to leave the world behind and boldly journey into the life that God has planned for man today.

About the Author

Bill Rasco has been serving as the pulpit minister at the Spring Creek Church of Christ since March 2009. He brings with him a deep background in Christian service and ministry. Bill is a graduate of Southern Christian University, with a degree in Biblical Studies. He served as a pulpit minister, youth minister, and education minister before joining the Spring Creek family. He has written several other studies with 21st Century Christian.
Chapter 1
Fruit Full
Galatians 5:22-23

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

WARM UP

There is no denying that our world needs Jesus. From the dawn of time, man has consistently chosen sin and self over relationship with God. Knowing man’s great struggle, God, from before the foundations of the earth, chose to make a path for us to walk with Him (Ephesians 1:4). In choosing us, God has made a way for our salvation through Jesus Christ. He has also promised to transform us to conform to His nature and character. In doing so, we shine as lights in the world. We live as objects of God’s great work on display before those around us. We deliberately act and think in ways that point to God and call men to see Him and surrender to Him (Matthew 5:14-16). Jesus is God’s answer for our sin problem and every other problem we face in a broken world. This is the heart of the gospel.

You may have seen this story in an email or heard it from a preacher during a sermon. It’s a cute little story with a good lesson.
A father wanted to read a magazine but was being bothered by his little girl, Shelby. She wanted to know what the United States looked like. Finally, he tore a sheet out of his new magazine on which the map of the country was printed. Tearing it into small pieces, he gave it to Shelby and said, “Go into the other room and see if you can put this together. This will show you our whole country today.”

After a few minutes, Shelby returned and handed him the map, correctly fitted and taped together. The father was surprised and asked how she had finished so quickly. “Oh,” she said, “on the other side of the paper is a picture of Jesus. When I got Jesus back where He belonged, then our country just came together.”

The Fruit of the Spirit is a picture of Jesus alive in His people. As the Fruit of the Spirit grows in us, we can be the light that God calls us to be. We can have an impact in the world through the power of God.

**WORK OUT**

Acts 13 tells us that Paul visited the Roman province of Galatia. During his visit there, the people worked to establish several churches in cities such as Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. But as the gospel spread, so did attacks on the church. The church in Galatia struggled to hold tight to the gospel that Paul had preached (Galatians 1:6). Worldly influences and traditional Jewish teaching lured the newly founded churches away from the gospel they had learned from Paul. To help combat these influences, the apostle to the Gentiles wrote one of his earliest letters: the letter to the Galatians.

Highlighting the struggles they were facing, Paul wrote about the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. In his short list of nine characteristics, Paul calls the Christians of the Galatian churches to embrace
Christ-likeness, experience the abundance of God, display the beauty of Christ to the world, and abide in our relationship with Jesus. This same list helps Christians today live in the purpose and will of God.

**The Fruit of the Spirit calls us to embrace Christ-likeness.**
The Fruit of the Spirit is not a random list of “good” things for Christians to practice. Being “carried along by the Holy Spirit,” Paul gives us a picture of Jesus (1 Peter 1:21). Our Savior possesses all of these qualities, and His people are meant to live them out. Paul shows us that Jesus is our standard. Being Christian is not about being “better” than the world or people we know. It is about living out the nature and character of Jesus in our lives. In order to follow Jesus, we leave behind all else and embrace His purpose by embracing His likeness. The Fruit of the Spirit teaches us what to embrace. Paul gives us a guide in our spiritual growth when he shares these qualities with the churches in Galatia.

**The Fruit of the Spirit calls us to abide in our relationship with Jesus.**
In John 15:1-11, Jesus uses the picture of fruit to show us how our relationship with Him works. He tells us that no branch can produce fruit unless it is connected to the vine. We cannot bear the Fruit of the Spirit if we are not connected to Jesus. We must learn to abide in Him. The Merriam-Webster Learner’s Dictionary defines *abide* as, “to stay or live somewhere; to remain or continue.” This is what Jesus calls us to do in our relationship with Him. If we choose to rest in the presence of Jesus, His power transforms us. We grow to love more, experience more joy, have more peace, etc. Living with Jesus changes how we perceive and experience the life we live. The Fruit of the Spirit provides a guide for abiding. It shows us that Jesus wants to be at the center of our love, our kindness, and our self-control. Abiding with Jesus means depending on Jesus for these things.

Abiding in Jesus also teaches us that the Fruit of the Spirit is not
based on circumstance. We often think that if our circumstances were different, we could be different, maybe more Christ-like. But our circumstances do not control our ability to abide in Jesus. Joy is not the absence of sorrow. Peace is not the absence of conflict. Patience is not the absence of irritation. The Fruit of the Spirit is not defined by circumstances of the world. The Fruit of the Spirit is an awareness of the presence of Jesus, and a call to abide in Him, no matter the circumstance. It teaches us where to live.

**The Fruit of the Spirit calls us to experience the abundance of God.**

Fruit is often a picture of abundance in the Bible, both physically and spiritually. In Deuteronomy 28:1-6, the nation of Israel prepares to leave the wilderness that has been their home since leaving captivity in Egypt. A new generation stands on the threshold of the Promised Land. Their leader, Moses, addresses the people and paints a picture of abundance, an abundance of God that flows from covenant relationship. As the people surrender themselves to the authority of God, they are blessed with a transformation of their lives. Though we often think of blessings in the form of physical gain, the Fruit of the Spirit promises a change in our character and spiritual nature.

Romans 6:1-14 promises the abundant blessing of Christ when we die to self in baptism to walk in newness of life in Jesus. In Acts 2:38, Peter preaches that at the time of baptism, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit moves into our lives and brings alive the character of Jesus. The Fruit of the Spirit highlights some of the areas that the Holy Spirit grows in us. We experience the abundance of God as we grow in the Fruit of the Spirit. Like the Israelites leaving the barrenness of the wilderness, we leave behind sin and death. Ahead lies the promise of the abundance of God. The Fruit of the Spirit promises a change in today and a hope for tomorrow. It teaches us where to keep our focus.
The Fruit of the Spirit calls us to display the beauty of Christ to the world.

In Isaiah 4:2-6, the prophet speaks of the coming of the Messiah. He gives us a picture of beauty as those who follow Jesus are made holy. They dwell in a land that is fruitful and beautiful. Those who follow God are blessed to dwell in the presence of the Lord. Isaiah 52:1-10 picks up this picture of beauty as Isaiah tells us that the Lord’s people carry a message into the world. In verse 7 we read, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”” Here Isaiah reminds the people of God that their salvation speaks to the world about the glory of God.

We look at this picture after the Messiah has come. You and I live in a time when the beauty of Jesus is on display in the world. We, the people of God, carry the good news of Jesus into the world. The beautiful transformation that God has made in you is a sign for the world to know that God can work the same change in anyone who would follow Him. The Fruit of the Spirit points us to the promise of the Holy Spirit living in us and transforming our lives to invite the world into a relationship of beauty with Jesus. The Fruit of the Spirit teaches us that we have a purpose and a mission.

COOL DOWN

A fictitious story about an irritated father and an innocent little girl teach us a powerful lesson. There is a cure for a broken world: Jesus. It is only the presence and power of Jesus that can heal the hurt of sin. But don’t buy too much into our little story. Always remember that we don’t put Jesus “back where He belonged.” Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He has a plan for the salvation of mankind.
The cure for sin is already paid for and in place. We must remember that our call is to surrender to His love, His care, and His grace.

The Fruit of the Spirit, more than anything else, is a call to surrender. The Galatian churches had surrendered to the gospel message and lost their way. Paul uses the Fruit of the Spirit as a reminder to recommit their lives to Jesus. We live in a world that needs the same reminder. And so, we are called to surrender ourselves, our families, our friends, our churches, our workplaces, our resources, everything we have, and everything we touch. But the promise is sure, and the power is great. The Fruit of the Spirit will change your life.

### Discussion Questions

1. List the Fruit of the Spirit.
2. Describe how the world is broken by sin?
3. How does each characteristic of the Fruit of the Spirit hold an answer for the sin sickness with which the world is dealing?
4. What impact does the Fruit of the Spirit have on the life of a believer?
5. Which part of the Fruit of the Spirit is most difficult for you? Why?
6. Which part of the Fruit of the Spirit is most evident in your life today? How?
7. How do you think a study of the Fruit of the Spirit will change your spiritual life and growth?

### Notes