

the  
Fruits  
of the  
Spirit

Living a Life Connected!

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# The Fruits of the Spirit

Living a Life Connected!

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“For he will be like a tree  
Planted by the water,  
That extends its roots by a stream  
And will not fear when the heat comes;  
But its leaves will be green,  
And it will not be anxious in a year of drought  
Nor cease to yield fruit.”  
Jeremiah 17:8

## Introduction

Is God's character being expressed in your life? Do the fruits of the Spirit seem like unattainable qualities or traits that only a few can acquire? Is the fruit of the Spirit really - just being "nice" to other people? Are we only capable of having one or two of the fruits of the Spirit but not all? What if after years of wanting to be kind and compassionate to others – you still live in the constant disappointment of anger and words that you wish you could take back.

I believe that the fruits of the Spirit are best understood within the context of "His Nature" – the *whole* nature of Christ or the character and attributes of God. He doesn't offer only one or two fruits to build into our life – but the whole package. Jesus didn't say, "*go forth and be nice*", but He did say He and the Father would take up residence in us. That way, - who He is - can be expressed in us in a way that the world will see and good things happen as a result! God's work in the world is all about His work in us. His nature, the fruits of the Spirit produced in our lives, is our only real measure of success of whether we are following Christ.

Possessing the fruits of the Spirit is not simply about being kind, nice or good. Rather, it is about God's character being expressed in your personality, - by your words and deeds, to a world that desperately needs an accurate view of Jesus Christ! Are we an accurate reflection of who He is? We can be, as we begin to give Him our full-attention and allow Him to fill us up, not with the latest spiritual fad or "new thing", but with who He is!



## Power: Real or Apparent

As an electrical technician for many years I've found there is one particular issue which must be addressed in all large industrial plants. This issue is the difference between *real* and *apparent* power. Real power, measured in wattage, is effective electrical energy that accomplishes actual work. Apparent power is electrical power that, because of different physical properties in the electrical system, loses a certain amount of energy. In industry, "real power" is effective and "apparent power" is lost money due to higher energy costs.

What about the *real* power of God? Could it be that much of what we see is wasted energy – or only *apparent* power? Have you ever wondered, "Where is the power of God in the church?" The very term "power" means different things to people, regardless of whether or not they are Christian. For some it is physical manifestation such as shaking or speaking in tongues, for others it is dynamic speaking from the pulpit, for some it means being in control of whatever situation they are a part of, for others it seems synonymous with success in life – career, family and relationships. Generally when we think of the power of God we closely link it with strength and ability. During the first years of the church, after the Day of Pentecost, we see God's power and strength demonstrated in such a way that enabled a small group of men & women – those first believers, to spread the "good news" throughout the known world. Is this same enablement and vitality for us today? I believe the answer is – Yes. God is the same – "*yesterday, today, and forever*". So if you and I are not

experiencing the fullness, joy and strength of God in our lives, as the saying goes – “guess who moved”. What has happened to the church? – To us? We read books, listen to teaching and preaching tapes, we give to mission endeavors, but often miss the obvious needs and blessing we could be to someone who lives next door. How effective are we at truly sharing the “good news” of salvation and the kingdom of God with those around us. Has the river of “*living water*” slowed to a mere trickle? And if it has – why?



## Recognizing Power!

We would all agree the “*power of God*” was manifested through Jesus during His ministry here on earth; but in the life of Jesus, *what did that power look like?* The word gives several poignant descriptions which don’t really seem to fit the modern view of strength and power.

*“He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.” Matthew 12:19-21*

*“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath neither form nor comeliness: and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.*

*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; he was despised and we esteemed him not.” Isaiah 53:2-3*

Jesus often spoke to large gatherings, but always took the time to minister to individuals – whatever their status in life. Examples of one-to-one and small group ministry are not difficult to find – here are only a few:

The Samaritan woman at the well. John 4:9

The healing of the blind man. Mark 8:22-23

Lazarus of Bethany. John 11:1-44

Lame man at Pool of Bethesda. John 5:2-9

## Nicodemus. John 3:1-10

Little children who came to Him. Matthew 19:13-14

One of the most extraordinary examples of “power” in the life of Jesus occurred during the final hours before the crucifixion. After suffering horrible and humiliating acts of cruelty, being publicly beaten and whipped. He quietly and resolutely answers Pilate; “*I am the truth*” and “*you could have no power over me unless allowed by the Father*”. Even from the cross he asked the Father to forgive those who placed Him there, - “*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*”.

All these qualities are vivid portraits into His nature and reveal the power of loving and redemptive actions. Even when it must have been the most difficult time to do so, He patiently gave Pilate a lesson in what comprised the “real truth” of life. He shows love and faithfulness to those directly involved with His crucifixion by forgiving them. What an example of real power!

Scripture instructs us to judge ourselves, so a closer look might be in order. How do you and I think of power? What do we see as true strength? We talk of the military might of a nation, or of a nation being a strong economic power; we admire entrepreneurial success and those who seem to be in control. Most people tend to admire those with strong, confident personalities. On a personal level, what is the true power and strength of our life? Jesus had the type of strength and power that was much different than we usually see. Even the first disciples missed this, and in the early stages of Jesus’ ministry, wondered when He would restore the kingdom to Israel, and drive out the Romans. So we know that His power was more

than mere assertiveness, persistence, or physical strength. His strength was borne out of truth and the power of the Spirit, as He completely gave Himself to the Father's will, plan, and purposes.

## Things Become New

### Ephesians 4:23

As a new Christian in the summer of 1970, one verse in particular troubled me, enough so that it became a prayer concern for many years, the verse “love not in word only but in your deeds as well”. This stirred in my heart the feeling that one might accept Christ and yet just be *playing games* in terms of honestly serving Jesus and walking worthy of Him, which is what we are encouraged to do – “***if we follow Him we ought to walk even as He walked***”.. At the time I thought, “Wow – what could it possibly mean to walk as He walked – to walk worthy of Him”. Was this something I could do – it seemed a pretty remote possibility, but again, I didn’t want my newfound faith in Jesus and my life as a Christian to just be a game I played or a “new” thing to try out. Over the next several years of my discipleship, with other faithful followers of Christ one thing became crystal clear –what I did *for* Jesus wasn’t so important as what He, by His Spirit, did for me, in my heart, my character, my personality – His work for us was complete and finished on the cross! He did what I could not. It really seemed that the more I focused on Him and spent time with Him, the more capacity I had to love others – Christian and non-Christian alike. I discovered during this time of growth, that many times ministry would occur – usually only realized after-the-fact. I would discover that I had encouraged, counseled someone, or even shared the “good news” in a way that really touched someone -without my even knowing. There was an aspect of “effortlessness” to ministry that I’m not really, to this day, sure I understand. One instance I recall was in talking to a friend whose marriage

was on the slide. During our conversation I had a genuine sense of compassion for my friend and his wife but only after did I realize that the words and thoughts I shared with him were “*way beyond me*”, - I don’t know how to describe these occurrences’ any other way, it had to be the Holy Spirit’s involvement in bringing God’s thoughts, wisdom and insight into particular situations. Perhaps you have discovered that as well, His work in us and through us is indeed a marvelous work!

This was a joyous time when it seemed I was day-by-day surprised by the things Jesus was doing. However; during the next decade or so it seemed like the church was saturated with teachings on success and prosperity, “finding your spiritual gifting and the *how-to* of using spiritual gifts, how many gifts are there anyway and on, and on and on,- until I had almost reached the point of “who cares anyway?” Of course the real truth is that God cares, He loved the world and loves it still, every one of us, and He enables the church, through His gifts, to touch the world with truth about the kingdom of God. It is also true that without the bubbling over of the spirit of God in our personal lives – the manifested “*fruits of the Spirit*” - that ministry gifts are without effectiveness and often seem to do more harm than good! This was the issue in the Corinthian church where the Christians had begun using their spiritual gifts but with a disregard and lack of wisdom toward others that were part of the gathering. This brought confusion and hurt to the early church, and Paul labeled these poor manners as a “lack of love”.

We, as followers of Christ, do not have the luxury of accepting God’s kingdom principles only if they are a comfortable fit with our view of power, strength, or what we believe is the way God should do things. Have we; perhaps because of the many diverse teachings we have to mentally sort

through and normal pressures of life, taken something beautiful and simple and reshaped it into something complex and confusing. At the end of the day our most prized goal should be for others to somehow, see Christ living in us. Christ is manifested and revealed to others through us! Perhaps it is time we re-examine, and hopefully gain a better understanding, of what it really means to experience “*being filled*” with His Spirit.

## Gifts of the Spirit!

It seems there is no end to hearing about the “gifts” of the Spirit. Everyone seems very eager to hear about and better understand what their gifting might be and how to use spiritual gifts. Could this be a misplaced focus? The gifts of prophecy, healing and working miracles, evangelism, preaching and teaching, the gifts of serving and giving are all of tremendous importance as they *are* God’s methods for redeeming mankind and reconciling us to Himself. And yet, the only reason for the manifestation of spiritual gifts is to help people move to Christ – where they too can experience the growth of “fruits of the Spirit” in their lives.

My concern is not with the validity of spiritual gifts or whether they should be expressed and experienced in our lives. There is no question about their need and value. I’m more concerned with our understanding that His gifts find their most legitimate and honest expression as they flow from lives that are *filled with the spirit*; and therefore, *filled with the fruits of the Spirit*. Paul wrote about these fruits in the book of Galatians:

*“But the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there are no laws.”, Galatians 5:22-23*

Many today seem to believe they have and can use spiritual gifts, and at the same time think that the fruits of the Holy Spirit aren’t really “*their thing*”, giving the topic little concern, - but the emphasis is different in New Testament writings. This is so clear that one would think there would be no confusion in the matter, but think again! On one occasion I heard a fellow Christian say that he thought the “fruits” were only for some *types* of

Christians – I suppose he meant the quieter, more thoughtful types, and that the “gifts” were for other types - like him of course, more the prophet type – “let’s go do some power evangelism”.

I believe this type of separation between the “*fruits of the spirit*” and the “*gifts of the spirit*” is problematic and confusing. Without his nature and character in our lives, which is synonymous with the “fruit of the Spirit”, I am convinced we will never be able to truly minister to others by God’s enablement or gifts – at least not to any great effect. New Testament writers had a great deal to say about this important subject:

*“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” Paul, (I Corinthians 13:1-13)*

The apostle Paul goes on to say that regardless of any miracle he performs or however elegantly he speaks to the masses – “*if I have not charity – I am nothing*” and “*it profits me nothing*”.

Without the “fruit” of charity (love) in our life Paul states that we are nothing, and little that we accomplish will have any real or lasting value. I believe Paul is teaching us that – these gifts are truly effective only *within the context of the “fruits of the Spirit” being active and alive in our own life!*

Paul wasn’t the only one to place more emphasis on the fruit of the Spirit than on the gifts of the Spirit. Jesus was very clear on this subject:

*“The world will know you are my followers by the love you have for one another.” Jesus, (John 13:35)*



Jesus didn't say that preaching, teaching, prophesying or any of the other "gifts" of the Spirit would really convince the world that we are his followers *or* that they should become His followers. One simple thing would be foundational in accomplishing this: "*your love for one another*". If this is true then it would seem we should be hearing much more teaching related to love, mercy, kindness and all the Holy Spirit "fruits", but instead we continue to be bombarded with teachings on how to find our gifts and use them in doing more so the church will grow and that this will somehow please Jesus! Once again, I believe that God is more interested in "*what we become*" than in "*what we do*". The doing, through the gifting and enablement of the Holy Spirit, will take care of itself as we walk out who we *are* in Him during the course of our earthly life!

To consider this as simply as possible, the *fruits of His spirit* are the characteristics of "*who we are*". The gifts of His Spirit are enablement, and so become "*what we do*". True expression of spiritual gifts flow out of the life, vigor and reality of "*who we are*", and so the most effective manifestation of spiritual gifts can *never* be separated from the fruits of the Spirit. This was the point the apostle Paul was making when he wrote: "*if I speak with the tongue of men and of angels – but have not love – I am nothing!*"

## Sounding Brass & Tinkling Cymbals

Isn't it refreshing to contemplate the difference; real, authentic and lasting, that God's presence in us can make? I believe it is time for us to make a commitment to God in our desire to continually be filled with his Spirit. Only then will we be able to utilize His methods (giftings) in a way that is truly beneficial to the world. I believe that without His "spirit fruitfulness" in our lives, the best we can do is to promote Christianity from a "political" position rather than as a heartfelt, life-changing experience that's built upon a relationship with our living Savior. I believe a good example of this is shown in the book of *Luke 9:53-56* when Jesus' message was not received in a Samaritan village. Two of his disciples; James and John, offer to help out in this awkward situation saying, "Lord, just say the word and we'll call down fire from heaven to consume them", - not exactly love in action. It's interesting to note that they were excited over the ministry and gifts that Jesus had enabled in them to spread the good news of the kingdom, but his correction to them in this instance was clear and to the point: "you know not what spirit you are of".

This is a good example of people, having the gifting of the Holy Spirit and yet still having the ability and desire to take action contrary to God's desires. I believe Jesus was speaking, and continues to speak to us today of the need to allow the fruits of His Spirit - love, kindness, compassion, gentleness, goodness, faith and patience, and self-control to motivate and influence our use of His spiritual gifts.

Political Christianity; however beneficial, is far too limited in scope to accomplish the mission of the church. We may pass laws which better reflect God's love and commands; but even though a law is right it usually divides people onto different sides of an issue, often insuring factions and political tug-of-war for years to come. But when we consider the fruits of the Spirit as being a well-spring of life, both in our lives and any ministry we share with others, we can with assurance know that - "Love never fails". As people see the nature and character of Jesus, being touched by the fruits of his Spirit in your life or mine, they are being communicated with on a heart-level, where true change really happens. This is being salt and light to the world! Laws change, political views change, spiritual gifts may change, even prophetic words may cease, but His spirit-nature that he imparts and builds into us will never fail – indeed, it's His primary aim to grow in us His nature, characterized by the fruits of his Spirit!

Let's consider some of the instances where Jesus and the early disciples spoke to this very issue, and may we become the good ground spoken of in the parable of the sower and the seed which produces a rich harvest in our lives and the lives of those we touch each day!

## What does Jesus say about fruit?

*“You will know them by what they produce. People don’t pick grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles, do they? In the same way every good tree produces good fruit, but a rotten tree produces bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, and a rotten tree cannot produce good fruit. Any tree that fails to produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into a fire. So you will know them by what they produce.” (Matthew 7:16-20)*

In our culture it is easy and perhaps common for us to think about “production” in terms of numbers, in terms of “how much”, we measure, analyze and quantify almost everything. How many attend our church, how large is the crowd, how many got saved, how many did you witness to, how many services on a Sunday, how large is the offering? While all these questions may be legitimate in the proper context, this is not the type of *produce* or production Jesus is referring to in this passage!

He further instructs us to:

*“make the tree good, and then its fruit will be good or make the tree rotten and its fruit will be rotten. A person can recognize a tree by its fruit.”*

*Jesus, (Matthew 12:33)*

For an example, consider some comparisons of character or personality traits and the contrasting results often associated with that *fruit* in terms of

emotions and real-life consequences. As we consider these contrasting forces in our life what seems more desirable to you?

## Characteristic Traits or Emotions!

*“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” Galatians 5:22-23*

### Love

*You & I are significant and important to God. God cares for all that concerns me. I can bring all my cares and concerns to Him! I am concerned for the well-being of others.*

### Hatred

*You are not significant. I'll do what I want, regardless of how it affects anyone else! What I want or need is all that matters to me! Self-centered and can be bent on revenge if wronged or slighted.*

### Joy

*Christ is in me, I am not alone. I have the promise of abundant and joyful life – now and in the life to come. Jesus never fails, even when evil comes at the hands of other people, God is greater and can work ALL Things – to my good!*

### Sorrow

*I am alone, why even go on living. Nothing ever works out well for me! I can never seem to get it right!*

## Peace

*I'm growing each day, I belong to God and He has all that concerns me well in hand. He will help me each day with His wisdom, knowledge and grace. He never fails – and even if at times I do, He continues to love and help me!*

## Anxiety

*I can't. The problem is too big for me to handle, I'll look foolish if I fail. It will never work. What will other people think of me? Don't get involved.*

## Patience

*Calm and not critical of others. Merciful toward others.*

## Impatience

*Wants it now, can be sharply critical and unforgiving.*

## Kindness

*Shows a genuine interest in other people and their concerns. Willing to listen to another person's opinion without trying to change them. Usually believes the best about someone else.*

## Meanness

*I'm only concerned about myself, selfishness. Cynical and often very negative. Usually believes the "worst" about someone."*

## Goodness

*Moral excellence and fairness in dealings with others. I think of this in terms of a peaceful attitude, kindness and generosity to others, but also being diligent in our work ethic with a willingness to share our time and knowledge.*

## Evil

*Flows from hatred of self and others. Ego-centric and narcissistic.*

## Faithfulness

*Loyal and able to persevere in difficulty. Consistent in good times and difficult times.*

## Unfaithfulness

*Loyal when convenient, very protective of fragile self-image.*

## Gentleness

*Consideration and amiability toward others. I want to be fair and also merciful in my judgment of other people and my dealings with them. When angry about an action or event – is it fair and focused?*

## Harshness



*Generalized feeling or attitude of everyone else being wrong while I'm right. Exhibits a lack of mercy toward the weaknesses of others but always has an excuse for their own weakness. "My way or the highway" method of dealing with other people.*

## Self-Control

*Response oriented. Possesses a conscious awareness of how your actions and words affect others.*

## Out-of-Control

*Reactionary. Thoughtless, uncaring actions that are often hurtful and insulting to others.*

These contrasts represent what a person's life *might* look like when the Fruits of the Spirit outweigh their lack! Please note that this is not to say that one will never react in an unkind, harsh or critical way. While we may be a compilation of strengths (His Nature) and weaknesses (lack of fruit), we can also embrace the desire for our life to move in the direction of greater fruitfulness in Christ.

By becoming more aware or mindful that our actions really matter, and staying "*connected to the vine*" by fellowship with Jesus, we will continually move along the continuum toward greater fruitfulness in the Spirit – growing in our relationship with our Creator!

If the fruit of the Spirit is of so great importance to our lives, *how* do we develop these characteristics? After all, he tells us to make the tree good

and yet, the fruit is “of the Spirit”, not us. What can we do, if anything, to allow God to manifest His nature in our individual lives? What is our part in all of this?

## Workers together with God

Jesus completed the work he needed to accomplish on the cross, so we naturally ask, “What more can be done?” -- What is *our part* in all of this?

Paul, in II Corinthians 6:1 encourages us to understand that we are “*workers together with God*”, He did and continues to do what we could not, and yet we still have a role to play, deeds to be done, a mission to accomplish and growth to experience! What are the things we *can* do that bring his fruits more fully into our lives?

The apostle James, in James 2:20, encourages us to do good works saying that “*faith without good works or that does nothing is worthless*”! It is quite possible that this is a key point in the development of the *nature of Christ* and the fruits of the Spirit in our lives – the simple act of finding a way to help, serve, or give – because we have faith in Christ and want to follow Him. To do this, even if our “feelings” and emotions don’t necessarily agree!

Since the late 1800’s, an interesting psychological phenomena has been extensively studied; it has been found that in almost every instance, feelings tend to follow actions. These studies were largely based on the theories and work of William James, a brilliant philosopher, psychologist and teacher, who in the 1880’s turned his attention to the relationship between our emotions and our actual behavior. He coined the phrase that “*if you want a quality – act as if you already had it*”, another interesting quote of James’ was “*I don’t sing because I’m happy- I’m happy because I sing*”. So, at

least according to this principle, - if we are waiting to have the emotional feelings of love, compassion, kindness, and joy before we take any positive action toward helping, giving or coming to the aid of those in need, - we may never take any action! If we surrender to Christ's stated objectives and teaching, *because of our faith in Him*, simply considering it an opportunity to serve, then I believe that somehow His nature develops in us, as well as feelings and emotions that make us feel good and connected to what we're doing!

My wife works in a nursing and long-term care facility for the elderly as a resident-care coordinator. I am continually amazed at the many opportunities she discovers (or God reveals) to help, serve and minister, both to residents and staff. I bring this up to make a point; as Christians today, we have no shortage of people trying to give you something more to do! This may be local church leaders, family, or even your employer. For instance, many companies in my city support local food banks, children's aid organizations, and programs such as Habitat for Humanity. There are many good causes and areas we can find to serve and minister to others, but we should always remember that it doesn't necessarily have to be an organized or community wide endeavor, so I encourage you to become aware of even the small thing that perhaps touches only a single person – it may only be a kind word!

*“Do not think that love in order to be genuine has to be extraordinary. What we need is to love without getting tired. Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies.” Mother Teresa*

Jesus said that even a cup of water given to one of his little ones doesn't go unrewarded! Let's be a doer of the word and know that Jesus himself is building "*His divine nature*" into our personality and character – the feelings and emotions will follow!

In 2 Peter, chapter 1, there is an interesting teaching that addresses this issue of our active involvement in developing the fruits of the Spirit!

*Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and the Savior Jesus Christ.*

*Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord;*

*Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue;*

*Whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceedingly great promises; that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of lust.*

*Yes, and for this very cause be diligent in adding to your faith, virtue; and in your virtue – knowledge;*

*And in your knowledge – self-control; and in your self-control – patience; and in your patience – godliness;*

*And in your godliness – brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness – love.*

*For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be neither idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*For he that lacks in these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins.*

*Therefore, fellow Christians, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never stumble.*

At this point you may be thinking – this is the dry, boring stuff. This is nothing more than just being a good person, what most of our parents tried to nurture in us as children. No wonder there is more fascination and intrigue with the gifts of the Spirit; after all – it’s exciting to see God in action. Like when Moses, by God’s power, divides the Red Sea -even now I envision Charlton Heston with his staff and long flowing robe! Pretty exciting stuff! This “add-to” list may seem like only the basics everyone should know, but is much more. The Apostle Peter included it *because* of its importance and because it is by these means we become a clear channel for God’s power and enablement to flow out.

To begin with Peter states that the beginning point of this process is the *faith* that we have in Christ as our Savior and Lord. He says it is the same faith that he and those first disciples – the apostles, shared as they believed in Jesus. This beginning point of faith is the foundation and well-spring for every other attribute that the Holy Spirit builds into our lives and the journey we share with every other believer! Many thoughts have been shared about faith in Christ and the role it plays in our lives.

Here I quote C.S. Lewis:

*“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”*

Another favorite of mine is by Ralph Waldo Emerson

*“All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen.”*

The Bible tells us in Hebrews 11:6 that, “without faith – it is impossible to please God”. Of course the person who *does not have* faith in God may be successful, kind and helpful to others, generous, giving and gracious to others as well; by any definition “*a good person*”. He may also exhibit leadership, have great self-control and a sense of moral integrity; we see this every day. Our heavenly Father has endowed all His creation with gifts and abilities – remember the parable of the “talents”. But again, what we’re talking about here is a different type of “*goodness*”. We are focusing on providing an unhindered channel for God’s gifts to operate and flow to those who need His touch, healing, restoration and wholeness. We may

utilize spiritual gifts and be an unbeliever, such as a gifted teacher or speaker, but *faith is foundational to our experience of “His divine nature”*.

As we consider our list of Holy Spirit fruits – I think we can see that one is not exclusive of any other, there is both overlap in these attributes and also the aspect of certain fruits growing and developing from others. Another way in which I enjoy thinking about “his divine nature” is to remember it as the *personality, character or heart of God* – it is the “who He is”. Most everyone knows the scripture, found in II Corinthians 3:13 that describes God only by a single attribute, “God is Love”

Thus, by our faith in Christ, and by our knowledge of God we become “partakers of his divine nature”, we have “grace and peace multiplied to us”, we are granted “all things pertaining to life and godliness” and in the process - we also become “fruitful”.

I think these are things we should be very excited about. These are the very attributes of which our world is in desperate need. In actuality, the only need for the healthy and true expression of the gifts of the Spirit by the Church is for the purpose of helping people come to be partakers of His divine nature, walk in His grace and peace, and live a fruitful life – now and through eternity!

So in a very practical sense what do we do next? Peter tells us clearly that the foundation to our having the expressed “fruits of the Spirit” in us is to have faith in Jesus as our Savior and Lord. As we enter a new life with God through Jesus, we begin to follow Him and minister to others out of the well-spring of love, kindness, joy and peace that we have been given. We will find ourselves in many situations and circumstances in which the Holy Spirit *might* use us in some way *by his gifts*; preaching, teaching, prayer for healing, or other giftings, but He will *always* minister to others *through His fruits* – that is to say “His Nature” in our lives! Opportunities will overtake



us for ministry as we are walking in the fruits of a spirit-filled life! We will have many opportunities for utilizing the gifts of the Spirit in a caring and compassionate way!

As our faith grows we begin to “take action”; this is the “add-to” method to which Peter is referring. We choose behavior that we know is within the scope of His will and purposes, those actions that are “*pleasing to the Holy Spirit*”. As we do these things we are in the “add-to” process that the apostle Peter is teaching us about!

Add to your Faith – Virtue!  
And to Virtue – Knowledge  
And to Knowledge – Self control  
And to Self-Control – Patience  
And to Patience – Godliness  
And to Godliness – Brotherly Kindness  
And to Brotherly Kindness – Love!

Virtue, by definition, is probably best described as “moral excellence” or “goodness”. As we consider “our” part in all of this, we simply cannot adopt an attitude that takes us on a legalistic tangent. Jesus made it very clear in His answer to a young man who came to him asking about eternal life. Jesus said to him - “*why do you call me good*” - “*there is none good except God*”, so even in his own statement about himself he didn’t allow others to attribute “goodness” or virtue to him. I believe that honest humility is critical to the whole “add-to” process. My personal definition of

humility is: *to be aware of our total dependency upon our Creator for all that sustains and benefits us in this life and the life to come.* As definitions go I think this is pretty comprehensive in scope. There is simply no part of our lives; spirit, soul or the physical, which is beyond His ability to bring restoration, healing and wholeness.

I believe this was what King David was conveying to us in the beautiful passage in Psalm 139:7-10:

*Where can I go to get away from your Spirit? Where can I run to get away from you?*

*If I go up to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in hell, you are there.*

*If I climb upward on the rays of the morning sun or land on the most distant shore of the sea where the sun sets, even there your hand would guide me and your right hand would hold on to me.*

Think of it this way – would we even recognize *good* if God had not first defined it for us? The Bible states it another way:

*“every good and perfect gift is from above, and comes from the Father of Lights with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17).*

So God the Father is good, and Jesus – God’s son and exact representation is good, so how do we add “goodness” to ourselves? The answer is really pretty simple – we allow Him to be who He is - in us. There are behaviors we engage in that cultivate the soil of our life, such as prayer and meditation on the word, allowing ourselves time to listen for the voice of the Spirit, and also fellowship with other Christians. As we begin to take simple steps and continue desiring His ways, we can expect that Jesus – through the power of His Spirit will fill you up and make it so!



## Faith, Hope, and Love!

The “*add-to*” list of I Peter details the fruits of the Spirit from a slightly different perspective than the book of Galatians. This is Biblical doctrine that is clear and easy to understand. It is unfortunate when these *simple and important things* get covered up by secondary issues, programs or the supposedly “new thing” that God is doing. I’ve heard this statement many times over the years, - “God is doing a new thing!” The thought always comes to mind, – what is wrong with the old thing He was doing? God is not fickle in any way and doesn’t require a new method every other week! He got it right the first time! The Father desires to do the same things in us as He has always done, to change lives by imparting His nature and character – the fruits of His Spirit! Paul wrote to the early believers of his desire that “*Christ be formed in them*”, to others he wrote, “*Till we all come to the measure of the stature and fullness of Christ*”. Jesus said it as well:

*“In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*

*He that hath my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me: and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself unto him*

*Judas (not Iscariot) said unto him, Lord, what is come to pass that thou will manifest yourself unto us and not unto the world?*

*Jesus answering said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word: my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”*

*John 14:20-23*

We know that God loves all people, His creation – both believer and non-believer, and yet here Jesus speaks of a love and fellowship that is unique and reserved for those who believe in Him and follow Him. Quite specifically, the believer is not alone because God, by His Spirit, resides within!

As we consider how to “*walk in the Spirit*”, increasingly filled with His nature, some things become more clear; specifically, *the simplicity of the Christian walk*. I’m not saying that the way is always easy or without trial, because it most assuredly is not, but Jesus said that we would have “*life, and have it abundantly*”. I increasingly find that simplicity, rather than complexity is one of the key attributes and joys of living in Christ. I believe it was Mark Twain who said: “*Everyone says that the Bible is difficult and hard to understand – actually I think we understand it all too well*”.

Jesus repeatedly encourages us in having the “*faith of a little child*”. He chides the Pharisees for their legalistic and complex rules and tells them it is “*mercy and grace toward others*” that God really desires.

Small changes in behavior and the actions we take can have significant impact in our life; affecting our emotions, the degree of optimism with which we face new challenges, and our awareness of His presence. This was recently reinforced in my thoughts as I read the book “*To Heaven and Back*” by Dr. Mary Neal. In 1999, Doctor Neal, who is an orthopedic surgeon, suffered a kayak accident in southern Chili’s Fuy River. During this time her kayak was pinned underwater and completely submerged. Despite the rescue efforts of her companions she was pinned underwater, from all accounts well over 15 minutes, and died. Her book details her awareness of moving from life to death to eternal life and then back again to her physical body – still lying on the river bank as her friends desperately

attempted to resuscitate her. In this very thoughtful account of her experience, Dr. Neal shares the insights she gained about God's nearness to us, and also some of the specifics she believes God wanted to teach her. One part of her story is particularly compelling to me - possibly because of the simple actions or behaviors that God emphasizes to her as having great importance.

During her lengthy hospital recovery time in Wyoming, she thought she would read her Bible; - the problem was that her vision was blurry and she could not focus well enough to read. However, there were three short verses of scripture that would become instantly clear in her vision as she paged through the Bible. It was as if God was saying – I want you to really get these three things!

I believe these three things are vitally important to our success in maintaining an awareness of the presence of Jesus in our lives and walking in the Spirit. I share these three verses as a simple reminder that small actions we take, in obedience to God, may allow Him access to make tremendous changes and inroads into our lives. Remember, we are discussing walking in our unique and special relationship with Jesus, referred to in John 14.

The practice of these action verses can open us to more clearly see His hand in our events and circumstances, better understand His leading and direction, and have a greater sense of His nearness and presence. We can experience greater faith and less fear, face new challenges with optimism and trust, and better recognize the many small ways and opportunities we have to be a friend to those around us each day. Like Jesus did - and continues to do for us!

These action verses are found in I Thessalonians 5: 16-18.



## [A Practical & Simple Way!](#)

### “Rejoice always.” I Thessalonians 5:16

There is always reason for our rejoicing! In our case as believers that reason is Jesus, fellowship with God, and the experience and promise of His Kingdom in our lives. Rejoicing, by God’s grace should be a lifestyle and emanates from His presence and our knowing that He has not left us alone in this world. We will go through trials at times and may not always be happy, but a deep, inner joy is the birthright of every believer!

### “Pray without Ceasing.” I Thessalonians 5:17

Throughout the scriptures we are admonished to pray for our needs and those of others, for our leaders, and for any situations that need the blessing and reality of God’s Kingdom. There are many examples that confirm to us that “*with God nothing is impossible*” and that no concern we have is too large or too small that it escapes our Father’s attention. On the most basic level, and I think talked about here, is the desire of the Father to have an open and constant communication with us! Even during the course of work responsibilities and involvement with the many situations we are confronted with each day, we can “turn our ear” of attention to Jesus and receive instruction, wisdom and fellowship.

“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God for those of us that are in Christ Jesus.” I

## Thessalonians 5:18

If we do this one thing – to verbally express thankfulness and praise - it builds an attitude of trust in God! Remember we earlier talked of the fact that feelings and emotions can follow our actions or behavior. Many people have communicated that there are some things that are impossible to be thankful for, an example might be the loss of a child or loved one. But what thankfulness and trust is really all about is the simple truth, that no matter how devastating our circumstance – God’s love, power and presence is greater! Even though living in an imperfect world, we can trust in His absolute and unfaltering care. I think this simple “*giving of thanks*” in any and all circumstances is a reaffirmation and a reminder to our inner man of “*who we belong to*” and of His presence with us.

Here is a brief account from “*The Hiding Place*”, by Corrie ten Boom, who survived the Nazi concentration camps of World War II. It is a valuable lesson in the power of thankfulness!

During World War 2, Corrie and her sister Betsie were committed to a prison camp under the Nazi regime. The huge dormitory to which they were assigned was packed to the gills, filthy, and worst of all - infested with fleas. Desperately they prayed that God would enable them to endure these conditions.

Betsie remembered the verse they had read that morning in Thessalonians: “*Give thanks in all circumstances.*” They began to thank God aloud for the circumstances they now were in. However, Corrie could not believe her ears when she heard Betsie sincerely thank God for the

fleas. She was sure Betsie was wrong to thank God for these horrid creatures!

The soldiers and guards treated the women cruelly when they were out and about the barracks. Unyielding guards patrolled all the barracks...but theirs. Inside their dorm, the two sisters were free to conduct worship services and encourage other prisoners with Bible reading and prayer. The guards wanted no part of the fleas that infested the area where the women stayed.

## Living a Life Connected!

What does it really mean to live a connected life? Today we are challenged by living in a culture of dis-connect, everyone with busy and demanding schedules that often leave little time for anything or anyone else! But what is God's design for spiritual, mental and physical health? Do our own hearts quietly whisper to us that this disconnected lifestyle is also, ultimately, a dysfunctional lifestyle. Feeling lonely or disconnected, according to various scientific studies, can lead to physical and mental health problems. Persistent loneliness is also linked to stress, as well as poorer functioning of the immune and cardiovascular systems. Evidence shows that loneliness makes it harder to control the habits and behaviors that can lead to health problems.

Our society is filled with tragic consequences of lonely and relationship-deprived living. Jesus calls us to something better, and that call is a mandate for living a life connected!

Any discussion about "*fruitful living*" or the "*fruit of the Spirit*" would be incomplete without hearing what He says to us about how to experience this vital lifestyle!

*"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.*

*I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”*

Jesus, (John 15:1-5)

Once again we read the word “*nothing*” and I believe it is used in the same context as Paul later used when writing to the Corinthian church about the importance of love or charity. If we desire to experience a fruitful life, have meaningful relationships, and minister Christ’s love and healing to the people we interact with each day, then connection to Jesus is of paramount importance. As we are made whole we can bring healing and wholeness into the lives of others. Any good we accomplish is a result of *our* spiritual health, which is a direct result of *connectedness* with Jesus. He is the one who tells us “*apart from Me – you can do nothing*”!

If you want to live a life that counts for “something” rather than “nothing” – Jesus is our starting point!

So, we might ask, I thought the work of Jesus in us is a finished work, and we know the Bible says we are not saved by our own works. Why should we need to do anything else? Is it not finished for us, if we believe and have accepted Jesus Christ? While it is true that we are saved by His grace, it is also true that we are, as the apostle Paul states to us, “*workers together with God*”.

Think of it this way, if our actions can “*grieve the Holy Spirit*” (Ephesians 4:30), and at the same time we are saved (born again), then doesn’t it follow that we can also, by our actions, please God. If this grieving or pleasing doesn’t involve our actions; either in word, thought, or deed, then how else could it ever occur? I don’t believe God is pining away or longing for us to

be carbon-copied Christians, all wearing three-piece suits. I do believe He desires in us authenticity, integrity, a life of grace, compassion and a love for others. All these things are the after-effects of being connected to Him. Fruits that grow and ripen! He wants us to daily experience the refreshing joy of His Presence! He wants us to have “ears to hear”; our hearts and minds tuned to Him.

It is my hope and prayer that we, as his followers, might be encouraged to follow Christ in the beauty of simplicity and truth. Let us long for the authentic in our lives and come with childlike faith and a knowing that He will do His works through us. May we experience the joy and power of genuine relationship with the risen Savior, and with our Father who is the creator of all. The Bible declares that “*His hand is not shortened that He cannot save, neither is His ear heavy, that He cannot hear our cry*” (Isaiah 59:1). The New Testament in Acts 17:27-28 says, “*He is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being*”.

You may, given the current state of our Christian culture, wonder if we Christians are still a relevant factor in society. Maybe you started out strong, enjoying real relationship with Christ, but slowly over the years, have become entrenched in a rut that seems impossible to climb out of. Whatever your state at the present moment; Jesus said that His and the Father’s express desire is “*to make their abode*” in you and to “*manifest themselves*” to you.

C.S. Lewis, in his book “*Mere Christianity*”, refers to the spark of the eternal that God has placed in each of us; the “*faint gleam of Heaven*” inside you and me. As I read these lines I always think of the beautiful passage from Proverbs 4:18, “*the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn that shines brighter and brighter until the full day.*” Clearly, we are “*works in progress*”; after all it takes time to build a cathedral, and He

refers to us as a Temple inhabited by His Spirit (I Corinthians 3:16). One thing is sure and certain; He is with us every step along this pathway of growth.

The commitment we make to allow God to be “big in us” creates a paradigm shift of sorts. As we take the simple actions of surrender, praise and thanksgiving, and even the simplest commitment to be obedient to His ways, we discover something that is altogether incredible: *God is with us. He inhabits the praise of His people – He is touching and bringing wholeness to us and to others – He is speaking insight and healing to someone in need. These are moments in which we will know – we are not alone in this endeavor!* Even though we are His temple, we will realize that something “*greater than the temple is here*” (Matthew 12:6).

We will discover new freshness and vitality in our lives and relationships, both with Jesus and those around us. We, as the church, will always be relevant as we live our lives in this way! On a practical level, the Lord’s Prayer, “*thy kingdom come and thy will be done, on earth as in Heaven*”, comes alive in us and is made real in our lives, families, and communities. All we really have to do is lose our fear of not being in control and submit ourselves to His gentle way! The Fruits of the Spirit; which is His nature manifested in our lives, and the ministry of spiritual gifts with honesty and integrity, will cause the world of those around us to become a better place. We will not be disappointed by Him who IS the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

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Note from the author:

Thank you for taking the time to purchase and read this short book. My hope and prayer is that it has been and will continue to be a blessing to you. If you would like to contact me online please do so at the following email address,

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Your comments and reviews are much appreciated!

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