

LOVE - GENTLENESS - JOY - KINDNESS  
PEACE - FAITHFULNESS - PATIENCE  
GENTLENESS - SELF-CONTROL



# Nine Fruits <sup>of</sup> the Spirit

*Cultivating a life that reflects Christ*

Bruce R. Edwards



# THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

*Cultivating a Life That Reflects Christ*

**Nine Fruits of the Spirit**  
*Cultivating a life that reflects Christ*  
Copyright © 2024  
by Bruce R. Edwards

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing, 2024

ISBN 979-8-89546-416-8

All Scripture quotations contained herein, unless otherwise noted, are the New King James Version of the Bible.  
Copyright 1979, 1980, 1982 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers

[www.bruce-edwards.com](http://www.bruce-edwards.com)

# Contents

Preface .....	Page 6
Introduction .....	Page 7
The Need to Bear Fruit .....	Page 11
Fruit versus Gifts .....	Page 15
Love .....	Page 19
Gentleness .....	Page 22
Joy .....	Page 32
Kindness .....	Page 37
Peace .....	Page 42
Faithfulness .....	Page 47
Patience .....	Page 52
Goodness .....	Page 62
Self-Control .....	Page 67
How to Cultivate the Fruit .....	Page 69
Other Fruits .....	Page 73
Closing .....	Page 88
Prayer of Salvation .....	Page 93
About the Author .....	Page 94

# Preface

Welcome to *The Nine Fruits of the Spirit: Cultivating a Life That Reflects Christ*. This book is a journey into the heart of the Christian life: bearing the fruit that shows the world who Jesus is. Over the years as a pastor, I've been privileged to teach, preach, and live the necessity of being filled with the Holy Spirit, being led by the Spirit, and ministering in the power of the Spirit. Yet, as vital as these are, there's another part of this spiritual life we can easily overlook—the cultivation of spiritual fruit. Without it, we may gain power but lack the grace, love, and depth that Jesus modeled.

There are two truths I discovered that transformed my life and ministry. The first was learning how to be filled with the Holy Spirit, not only as a one-time experience but as a continual, dynamic relationship with God. Ephesians 5:18 commands us to be filled, and 1 John 5:14-15 assures us that He will answer when we ask according to His will. So, we ask, we believe, and we receive. This process is the gateway to true spiritual power, but it doesn't stop there.

The second truth I discovered was equally powerful—understanding that the fruit of the Spirit is meant to be demonstrated through us by faith, shaping us into the likeness of Christ. This book is a result of that discovery, born out of years of prayer, study, and, most importantly, practice. My desire is to show you that cultivating these fruits isn't just an ideal; it's a calling, a reflection of Jesus' character brought to life through us.

This subject is crucial because without these fruits—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—our witness to the world falls short. These qualities are the mark of a life touched by God, and they require nurture, prayer, and faith to grow.

Thank you for joining me on this journey. May this book inspire, equip, and challenge you to reflect the fullness of Christ's life in yours, bringing hope and transformation to those around you.

# Introduction

The Bible paints a vivid picture of what a believer's life can and should look like. It's not a life defined by our own strength or accomplishments but by the transformative work of the Holy Spirit within us. One of the clearest depictions of this transformation is found in Galatians 5:22-23, where the Apostle Paul lists what he calls the Fruit of the Spirit: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things, there is no law."*

At first glance, this list might seem like just another set of moral ideals, a checklist for "good Christian behavior." But the Fruit of the Spirit is so much more. It's not about trying harder or being better in our own strength. Instead, it's about what God wants to cultivate in our hearts and lives through the power of His Spirit. This study will explore the depth and meaning of each aspect of the fruit, why it is essential, and how we can allow God to grow these qualities in us.

## Understanding the Fruit of the Spirit

First, it's important to understand what Paul means by "fruit." Just like a tree bears fruit that reveals its health, the fruit of the Spirit is the outward evidence of an inward transformation. It's the result of living in a close relationship with God, where His Spirit begins to shape and mold our character to reflect that of Christ.

In this sense, the fruit of the Spirit isn't something we manufacture on our own. We don't make ourselves more loving, patient, or kind through sheer willpower. These qualities grow naturally when we walk with the Holy Spirit, much like fruit naturally grows on a healthy tree. Jesus used a similar analogy in John 15:5, where He said:

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing."*

To understand the Fruit of the Spirit, we have to understand that it's not about self-improvement, but about remaining connected to Christ and

allowing Him to work in and through us. The fruit is evidence of His life flowing through us.

### **Why the Fruit of the Spirit is Important**

So why is the fruit of the Spirit such a central part of the Christian life? Why did Paul emphasize these specific traits? To answer this, we need to go back to the core purpose of the Gospel itself. God's primary goal in our lives isn't simply to forgive us of our sins or give us eternal life (although these are central truths). His ultimate goal is to transform us into the likeness of Christ. This process is called sanctification, and the fruit of the Spirit is evidence that we're being sanctified—made holy—through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is also the antidote to the destructive “works of the flesh” that Paul warns about earlier in Galatians 5. He contrasts the fruit of the Spirit with behaviors like anger, jealousy, envy, and immorality. In other words, the fruit of the Spirit is the solution to the struggles and sins that try to derail us in our daily walk with God. It's the result of what happens when we stop trying to fix ourselves and allow God to do the work in us.

### **The Holy Spirit: The Source of Transformation**

Another key aspect of studying the fruit of the Spirit is understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. When Jesus ascended to heaven, He promised His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit to be their helper and guide (John 14:16-17). As believers, we're not left to figure out life on our own. The Holy Spirit is the one who enables us to live the way God has called us to live.

In Ezekiel 36:26-27, God made this promise to His people:

*“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”*

This passage beautifully illustrates the essence of the fruit of the Spirit: it's a heart transformation. The Holy Spirit softens our hearts, making



them more like Christ's. As we submit to Him, His presence produces fruit in us—those qualities that reflect His character and enable us to live out His purposes.

### **A Journey of Growth and Maturity**

It's important to remember that cultivating the fruit of the Spirit is a lifelong process. Growth takes time. Just as a tree doesn't produce fruit overnight, we don't instantly become fully loving, joyful, or patient. This journey requires patience, perseverance, and a willingness to trust God through the ups and downs of life.

Throughout this study, we'll look at each aspect of the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. For each one, we'll explore:

- What it means biblically and how it reflects the character of Christ.
- How it works in practical, everyday life.
- Why it is needed in our personal lives, relationships, and witness to the world.
- How we can cultivate it in our hearts through our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

### **Cultivating a Christlike Life**

God's invitation to us is clear: "Be holy, as I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). But holiness isn't just about following rules or avoiding sin. It's about being so connected to Christ that His life and character flow out of us. The fruit of the Spirit is how God shapes us into people who reflect His love and grace to the world around us.

This study is an opportunity to dive deeper into what it means to live a Spirit-filled life. As we explore each aspect of the fruit of the Spirit, let's be open to the ways God wants to work in us. He desires to produce this fruit in each of us, not just so we can live fulfilling lives, but so that we can be a reflection of His goodness to a world that desperately needs to see it.

So, are you ready to grow? Let’s embark on this journey together, trusting that God will use His Word to transform our hearts and lives for His glory. After all, the fruit of the Spirit isn’t just about becoming better people—it’s about becoming more like Jesus, the ultimate model of love, joy, peace, and all the qualities that make up the fruit. I encourage you to take notes and personalize the application of each lesson.

NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# **The Need to Bear Fruit**

God has graced our world with trees that not only bear beautiful foliage but also produce delicious, nourishing fruit. Imagine, however, a tree that, after years of care, fails to bear fruit or, worse, yields inedible fruit. It's a disappointing sight and a missed opportunity for something greater. Jesus illustrated this in the parable of the unfruitful fig tree, telling of a landowner who, after years of waiting, ordered an unfruitful tree cut down and replaced (Luke 13:6-9). Jesus also compared trees that produce "good fruit" to those that yield "bad fruit," emphasizing that only trees bearing good fruit are worthy of keeping (Matt. 7:15-20).

As Christians, we are likewise called to bear good fruit—not apples or oranges, but the qualities of character and conduct that reflect God's Spirit working within us. This book is an invitation to explore the importance of bearing good fruit, the kinds of fruit we are to bear, and how we can cultivate these qualities in our lives. The Apostle Paul provides us with a clear contrast in Galatians 5:19-26, where he describes the "fruit" of a life led by the Spirit versus one driven by fleshly desires. Each path yields a different kind of harvest—one good, one harmful. Our focus here will be on nurturing the kind of good fruit that honors God.

## **The Principle of Sowing and Reaping: We Are All Sowing Seeds**

Most of us are familiar with the principle of sowing and reaping: "Whatever you sow, you will also reap" (Gal. 6:7). It's a simple, yet profound truth with both positive and negative implications. If you sow harmful, destructive seeds, you'll ultimately reap a bitter harvest. However, if you sow good, life-giving seeds, you can expect a fruitful and abundant harvest.

Here's the heart of the matter: we are both the Sowers and the reapers in our lives. It is up to us whether we follow Spirit's guidance to sow good seeds or allow fleshly impulses to produce bad seed. By choosing to walk with the Spirit and plant seeds that align with God's purposes, we set the stage for good fruit to grow and flourish in our lives.

## **How to Bear Good Fruit**

Bearing good fruit requires a conscious effort to align ourselves with Christ, who is described as the true vine in John 15. Jesus presents three key principles to ensure that our lives are fruitful:

1. **Connection to the Vine (Christ):** We cannot bear fruit on our own. Our source of life and fruitfulness is Jesus Himself. Just as a branch depends on the vine for sustenance, we must be “in Christ” to thrive and bear fruit that lasts (John 15:1-4). This connection is more than just association—it’s an abiding, life-giving relationship.
2. **Abiding in the Vine (Christ):** Jesus emphasizes that we must “remain” in Him. Abiding is not a temporary state; it’s an ongoing commitment to live in fellowship with Jesus. When we turn away or grow distant, our ability to bear fruit is compromised (John 15:4). Staying connected to Christ is the foundation for lasting growth.
3. **Abiding in His Word:** Jesus also teaches that those who abide in His word will bear much fruit (John 15:7-8). God’s Word equips us with wisdom, guidance, and strength to live in a way that reflects His heart. It’s through the study and application of Scripture that we gain the insights needed to bear fruit that pleases God.

In addition, Jesus mentions that God will “prune” us, removing anything that hinders our growth. Though the pruning process may be uncomfortable, it ultimately makes us more fruitful, fostering even greater spiritual growth and effectiveness in His kingdom.

## **Types of Good Fruit**

As we commit to bearing fruit, it’s helpful to know that there are different “kinds” of good fruit God desires for us to produce. Here are two key types of fruit:

1. **Fruit in Our Character:** This type of fruit reflects the inner transformation God brings about in our lives. It’s visible in our

attitudes, behaviors, and choices, which are aligned with God's character. Qualities like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self-control are examples of this fruit (Galatians 5:22-23). They shape us into people who reflect Christ in all we do.

2. **Fruit in Our Kingdom Work:** This type of fruit is outward, evidenced by how we serve, pray, witness, and minister to others. As we let the Spirit lead us, our lives impact others for God's kingdom. Sharing our faith, encouraging others, and serving with love are ways we bear fruit that advances God's mission.

Both kinds of fruit are essential for a full, effective Christian life. Our character impacts our witness, and our witness, in turn, is more powerful when it comes from a life transformed by God. In bearing both kinds of fruit, we fulfill our calling to be lights in the world.

### **The Law of the Harvest: God Holds Us Accountable**

Whether we acknowledge it or not, the principle of sowing and reaping remains a universal law. God sees both the seeds we sow and the fruit we bear. He desires for us to bear good fruit, and He holds us accountable for what we produce. If we've sown well, He promises a harvest of blessing, but if we've neglected His guidance, there will be consequences (Galatians 6:7-8).

### **Conclusion: The Journey Toward Fruitfulness**

This book is not just about recognizing the need to bear fruit; it's a guide for experiencing the joy and reward of a life that is fruitful in Christ. We see an example of this in Acts 6:3, where the early church sought leaders who were "of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom." Just as they needed leaders whose lives displayed the fruit of the Spirit, so too does our world today.

As we journey through this book, remember that bearing fruit takes time and patience. Just as a tree does not yield fruit overnight, spiritual fruit matures gradually. By remaining connected to Christ, abiding in His word, and submitting to the Spirit's work within us, we can bear

fruit that blesses our lives and others. The Holy Spirit’s power is available to each of us, not only to transform our own hearts but to make us effective in reaching out to others.

Let us allow God’s Spirit to work in us so that our lives reflect Jesus fully. A fruitful life is a life that glorifies God, blesses others, and brings the deepest fulfillment to us.

NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Fruit versus Gifts

Before we get into our study of each of the fruits of the spirit it is important for us to make sure we understand the significant difference between gifts and fruit.

## Understanding the Difference from a Biblical Perspective

When it comes to understanding the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, two terms often come up in Christian circles: the **Fruit of the Spirit** and the **Gifts of the Spirit**. They're both vital aspects of the Spirit's presence in a believer's life, but they serve different purposes. While they are distinct, they work together to shape us into people who reflect Christ and contribute to God's mission on earth. Let's explore what the Bible says about both the fruit and the gifts of the Spirit, why they matter, and how they differ.

## The Fruit of the Spirit: Evidence of Transformation

The **Fruit of the Spirit**, found in **Galatians 5:22-23**, refers to the qualities that the Holy Spirit develops in the life of a believer. Paul describes these qualities as:

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

The fruit of the Spirit is evidence of an inward transformation. It's not about what we do, but about who we are becoming as a result of the Holy Spirit working within us. Just like fruit on a tree grows naturally as a result of the tree's health and nourishment, the fruit of the Spirit grows naturally in us as we stay connected to God.

Think of the fruit of the Spirit as **character traits**. These are qualities that reflect the character of Christ, and they are meant to be on display in every believer's life. The fruit of the Spirit is a universal calling for all Christians. In other words, **every believer should be cultivating these traits**—it's not optional, and it's not just for a select few.

## How Does the Fruit of the Spirit Work?

The fruit of the Spirit is the result of walking with the Holy Spirit, which means it's not something we can manufacture through sheer effort. It's what happens when we surrender to the Spirit's work in our hearts. As we yield to the Spirit, He begins to transform our desires, attitudes, and behaviors to look more like Jesus.

The fruit of the Spirit is all about **who we are becoming**. It's a process of transformation that reflects the work of sanctification—being made holy. This fruit is **needed** in our relationships, our leadership, and our daily witness to the world. Why? Because the world doesn't need more religious people who follow rules; it needs more Christlike people who live out love, joy, peace, and the rest of the fruit in their everyday lives.

## The Gifts of the Spirit: Tools for Ministry

Now let's turn our attention to the **Gifts of the Spirit**. These are supernatural abilities given by the Holy Spirit to believers for the purpose of **building up the church** and advancing God's kingdom. Unlike the fruit of the Spirit, which is about character, the gifts of the Spirit are about **power and function**. They are tools for ministry.

Paul provides lists of spiritual gifts in **1 Corinthians 12**, and they include; **Prophecy**

- **Word of Wisdom**
- **Word of Knowledge**
- **“Special” Faith**
- **Gift’s” of Healing**
- **Working of Miracles**
- **Prophecy**
- **Discerning of Spirits**
- **Different Kinds of Tongues**
- **Interpretation of Tongues**

In **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**, Paul writes, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”

The key point here is that **spiritual gifts are given to each believer as the Spirit wills** (1 Corinthians 12:11). Not every Christian will have



every gift, and that's okay! The purpose of the gifts is to build up the Body of Christ (the Church), not for personal glory or individual fulfillment. **They are given for the benefit of others.**

### **How Do the Gifts of the Spirit Work?**

The gifts of the Spirit are **activated** by the Holy Spirit and are meant to be used in service to others. For example, someone with the gift of prophecy speaks God's words to encourage, exhort, or challenge others, while someone with the gift of healing might pray for someone who is physically sick.

The gifts are not for our own enjoyment or personal gain; they are given so that we can **serve others and glorify God**. While all believers are called to bear the fruit of the Spirit, **spiritual gifts vary** from person to person, however, every believer is a candidate for the gifts of the Spirit to work through. The Spirit distributes them according to His will and the needs of the church.

### **Key Differences Between the Fruit and the Gifts of the Spirit**

1. **Character vs. Power:** The fruit of the Spirit is about our character—who we are becoming in Christ. The gifts of the Spirit are about the power of God working through us to accomplish His purposes in the world.
2. **Universal vs. Unique:** Every believer is called to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit, but not every believer has every spiritual gift. The fruit is meant for all Christians, while the gifts are distributed differently to each person.
3. **Inward vs. Outward:** The fruit of the Spirit is primarily about inward transformation. It's what happens on the inside as we grow in our relationship with God. The gifts of the Spirit, on the other hand, are about outward action—using our gifts to serve others and advance God's kingdom.

4. **Lifelong Growth vs. Momentary Manifestation:** The fruit of the Spirit grows over time. It's a lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus. The gifts of the Spirit, however, can be given in specific moments for specific tasks.

### **Why Both Are Needed**

Both the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit are essential to the Christian life, but they serve different purposes. **The fruit of the Spirit shapes our character**, making us more Christlike and able to love others well. **The gifts of the Spirit equip us for ministry**, giving us the tools we need to serve and build up the Body of Christ.

It's important not to focus on one at the expense of the other. Some believers get caught up in the pursuit of spiritual gifts and neglect the cultivation of the fruit of the Spirit, leading to pride or misuse of their gifts. On the other hand, some may focus so much on developing character that they fail to recognize and operate in the supernatural gifts God has given them to impact the world.

**Both are needed** for a balanced, Spirit-filled life. As Paul says in **1 Corinthians 13**, even the most impressive spiritual gifts are meaningless without love—the first fruit of the Spirit.

### **Conclusion**

The **Fruit of the Spirit** and the **Gifts of the Spirit** are both essential aspects of the Christian life. The fruit reflects the inward transformation the Spirit brings, shaping us into people who reflect Christ's character. The gifts, on the other hand, are the tools the Spirit gives us to fulfill our purpose and build up the church.

As you grow in your relationship with God, remember that He desires to both transform your heart and empower you for His service. Allow the Spirit to produce His fruit in your life and be open to receiving and using the gifts He gives you. The world needs both your Christlike character and your Spirit-empowered service.

Let's embrace both and see what God can do in and through us!

# LOVE

## The God Kind of Love

The first fruit we will cover is love because love is foundational to all other virtues listed in Galatians 5:22-23, representing the very essence of God's character. Scripture tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). This divine love, often called *agape* in Greek, is different from human or conditional love. It is selfless, unconditional, sacrificial, and eternal—a love that goes beyond emotions and actions driven by personal benefit or reward.

Before we discuss what the fruit of love is we need first to understand the concept of love from a Biblical standpoint. The Greek language has a way of making those fine distinctions by a word rather than a descriptive phrase. We use the word "love" in the English language to refer to several different concepts. We often have to follow this word with something that shows its meaning in what we are talking about. To say that I love ice cream is not the same as saying I love my wife or my children. In the Greek language, there are four words that are used to denote "love" in different ways or relationships. We want to look carefully at each one and draw conclusions about what this particular fruit is.

## GREEK WORDS FOR LOVE

### 1. "EROS"

This word, as such, does not appear in the Scriptures but was used much among the Greek-speaking world. We have carried this Greek word over into our English language that gives a clue to its meaning—"Erotic!" The idea is that of sexual desire, passion, lust for another, etc. Many people in our society today use the word "love" with reference to their passion or lust for another person. Such does not do justice to the concept of love that the Spirit brings into our lives.

## 2. "STORGE"

This word is used in the Bible but is combined with other terms to show its intended concept. It is found in the following passages:

a) "ASTORGOUS"—"Without natural affection." (Rom. 1:31; 2 Tim. 3:3). Families should have a natural "affection" for one another. When they do not, it is a "sin" for which the Gentile world was condemned.

b) PHILOSTORGOS—"Kindly affectioned" (Rom. 12:10). This verse also adds: "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love." Since we are brothers and sisters in Christ, we should have or show a natural affection to one another. While this term has a good connotation to it, it is not a strong concept of love like the next two terms used in Scripture.

## 3. "PHILIA"

This word is used over 20 times in the New Testament. It carries with it the concept of a warm, tender, intimate relationship with another human being. The words: "friend" or "companion" identify with this Greek word. It denotes the closeness between human beings.

David and Jonathan's relationship illustrates this concept (2 Sam. 1:26). Jesus' relationship with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha illustrates this concept also (John 11:3). In Romans 12:10, two words are combined that give an idea of the closeness of this relationship: "brotherly love" (Philadelphia). This kind of affection or love can be between any other human being that we have drawn close to—but not indicating "eros" nor necessarily "storge." This love is prompted by the mind and emotions and usually denotes an attachment with another person.

## **5. "AGAPE"**

This word is used over 100 times in the New Testament. This word does not necessarily require an emotional, affectionate, or passionate response to another. This love is more from the mind, reason, or intelligence. It is a concern for the well-being of another person even if he is your enemy. Jesus said we were to "love" (agape) our enemies (Matt. 5:43-44). You want his welfare even if he doesn't want yours. Jesus is here showing that we can exercise our will to seek the good for another person no matter what he has done. Jesus illustrated this in the 23rd chapter of Matthew. Jesus obviously loves the world of human beings who were in rebellion against God....to the extent that He gave His life to redeem us (John 3:16). But His strong rebukes were obviously given to these religious leaders to try to awaken them to their doomed condition and their need of immediate repentance. He ended the chapter with a compassionate picture of God's love for them illustrated by a "mother hen" (Matt. 23:37-39). When the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians that they were carnal, it was not because he hated them, but rather because he loved (agape) them! (2 Cor. 12:15).

### **THE HIGHEST CONCEPT OF LOVE—AGAPE!**

Agape is Godly love! There is no higher concept of love than this. God's love for His creatures, even though undeserved, was freely offered to all (Jn. 3:16). Jesus showed the importance of this concept of love when he pointed out what the two greatest commands were:

- (1) To love God with our whole mind, soul, and heart; and (2) To love our neighbor as ourselves. (Matt. 22:37-39). Then, He added something very important to see—"On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Matt. 22:40). Another time, Jesus stated it this way: "If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15). Or, as the Apostle Paul expressed it: "Love does not harm a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the Law." (Rom. 13:10). Love causes us to do what is right, even if it means our physical death (1 John 3:16).

- (2) Love (Agape) needs to regulate and guide "eros" so that our actions will be for the best of all concerned. Love (Agape) needs to be added to "storge" so that even though my family is not deserving of my affection, I will extend it anyway. Love (Agape) needs to be present even when there are "eros," "storge," and even "philia" in my marriage—because the first three may wane over time, but "agape" can grow stronger and cement that relationship all the way to the end. "Agape" is the primary reason why I remain faithful as a Christian, even when things seem to be coming apart (1 Cor. 15:58).

Abraham sets an example of "agape" when he starts on the journey to offer his son as a sacrifice unto God. This was not his idea, but God's! His love (agape) for God was so strong that he was determined to be obedient to God in the face of what all would say was "far out!" Yet, he and his son made the journey to Mount Moriah. When Isaac asked his father where the sacrificial lamb was, you know that the fatherly emotions must have been strong when he said: "God will provide!" When the altar was prepared, Isaac knew then that he was to be the sacrificial lamb. The example of his father must have given him strength to also be obedient to his father as Abraham was to the heavenly Father. As Abraham raised his hand to strike the blow, the Angel of the Lord stayed his hand—for he had proven his love to the Father. Abraham had to control the emotional love of "storge" (family affections) and "philia" (closeness to his son) in order to be obedient to God. What an example of "agape" for us to follow!

### **PRIORITY OF LOVE (AGAPE)**

When Jesus said: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me..." was trying to help us see that "agape" supersedes any other love of man (Matt. 10:37) and will be rewarded here and hereafter by God (Matt. 10:29). God wants us to love our family and to show brotherly love and friendship to those about us; but these are not to override our love for Him. He must come first and foremost in our lives if we are to be saved eternally—even before our own desires (Matt.

16:24-25). Obedience from our hearts and minds to the will of God is our way of clearly saying to God...."I love and respect and honor you." The Apostle John stated: "but whoso keeps his word, in him verily has the love (agape) of God been perfected." (1 John 2:5). And the Apostle Paul concludes chapter thirteen of 1 Corinthians in his discussion on love by saying: "Now abides faith, hope, love, these three: and the greatest of these is love (agape)" (1 Cor. 13:13).

### **What is the Fruit of the Spirit of Love?**

Now that we have an understanding of what this love is let's take a look at the fruit of the spirit of love. The Fruit of the Spirit of love is the manifestation of God's love in and through us by the work of the Holy Spirit. It is a love that mirrors God's unconditional affection for us and is expressed in how we treat others, regardless of circumstances or personal feelings. This love is not based on emotions but is rooted in a choice—a decision to value, honor, and care for others, even when it's difficult or inconvenient. It's the kind of love that puts others before ourselves, not because they deserve it, but because we are called to reflect the love of Christ.

This love is:

- **Unconditional:** It does not depend on how others treat us, their merits, or whether they return the love. It mirrors the love Christ demonstrated by dying for us "while we were still sinners" (Romans 5:8).
- **Sacrificial:** It often requires giving up something of ourselves—whether that's time, energy, or personal desires—for the sake of others.
- **Enduring:** It is a love that remains steady and does not waver based on circumstances. It "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Corinthians 13:7).

- **Forgiving:** Love covers offenses, forgives wrongs, and seeks reconciliation rather than revenge (1 Peter 4:8).

### **How Does the Fruit of the Spirit of Love Work?**

The Fruit of the Spirit of love is not something we can produce on our own. Rather, it works through us as we abide in Christ and yield to the Holy Spirit. As we deepen our relationship with God, His love begins to overflow from within us and impacts those around us.

1. **Connection with God:** The first and most important step in bearing the fruit of love is staying connected to the source—God Himself. Jesus said, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love” (John 15:9). By spending time in prayer, studying Scripture, and surrendering to God, we allow His love to fill us and flow through us.
2. **Empowerment by the Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit works in our hearts to transform us, enabling us to love as God loves. Human love, limited by selfishness and pride, can only go so far. But through the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to love even those who are difficult to love, those who hurt us, or those who cannot repay us.
3. **Practical Expression:** The Fruit of the Spirit of love is not just a feeling; it is demonstrated through actions. It manifests in kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and acts of service. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul details what love looks like in practice: it is patient, kind, not envious or boastful, not arrogant or rude. It seeks the good of others and rejoices in truth.

### **Why Is the Fruit of the Spirit of Love Needed?**

1. **Reflects God’s Nature:** Love is the core of who God is. When we exhibit the Fruit of the Spirit of love, we reflect His nature



to the world. Jesus said, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). Our ability to love unconditionally sets us apart as followers of Christ and serves as a testimony of God’s presence in our lives.

2. **Fulfills the Law:** Love fulfills the entirety of God’s commandments. Jesus summarized the law and the prophets in two commands: love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-40). Paul echoes this in Romans 13:10, “Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.” When we walk in love, we naturally obey God’s commandments because true love will never seek to harm or wrong another person.
3. **Transforms Relationships:** The Fruit of the Spirit of love transforms our relationships by allowing us to relate to others as Christ would. It brings healing to brokenness, fosters unity where there is division, and encourages selflessness where selfishness once ruled. In a world often marked by hate, division, and anger, love is a powerful force that brings reconciliation, peace, and understanding.
4. **Overcomes Fear and Sin:** Love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). When we are filled with God’s love, fear loses its grip on our hearts. Fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of not being enough—all these melt away in the presence of divine love. Additionally, love is a powerful antidote to sin. As we grow in love, our selfish tendencies begin to fade, and we become more concerned with the well-being of others than our own desires.

5. **Builds the Church and Community:** The Fruit of the Spirit of love is essential for building a healthy, thriving community of believers. Love is the glue that holds the church together. Without love, the body of Christ becomes divided, judgmental, and ineffective in its mission. With love, however, the church becomes a beacon of hope, a place of healing, and a testimony of God's grace.

### Conclusion

The Fruit of the Spirit of love is not just a nice idea or an optional part of the Christian life; it is the very heart of what it means to follow Christ. It is through love that we reflect the character of God, fulfill His commandments, and bring light to the world around us. This love is not something we can manufacture on our own, but as we abide in Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to work within us, we will bear the fruit of love that transforms lives—both ours and those around us.

“Love (*agape*) suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup> does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup> Love never fails.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

# GENTLENESS

## Not Weakness or Passivity.

Gentleness is often misunderstood or overlooked in today's world, where strength is equated with dominance or aggression. However, the biblical concept of gentleness is deeply rooted in strength under control, humility, and a compassionate spirit that reflects the heart of God.

In Galatians 5:22-23, gentleness (*prautēs* in Greek) is listed as a fruit that is cultivated in us by the Holy Spirit. Gentleness is not weakness; rather, it is power under control, much like a tamed horse that possesses great strength but is directed with calmness and discipline. In other words, gentleness is a form of strength that manifests as humility, kindness, and consideration in our actions and attitudes toward others.

## Defining Gentleness in Other Words

- **Strength under control:** Gentleness is not about being passive or timid; it's about having the ability to act with strength but choosing to be restrained, calm, and kind.
- **Meekness:** Meekness is another word often used to describe gentleness. It refers to a humble and patient attitude, especially when dealing with others.
- **Kindness with humility:** It involves treating others with respect, compassion, and grace, even when you have the power or authority to act otherwise.
- **A calm and composed spirit:** Gentleness requires self-control in emotionally charged situations, demonstrating peace and maturity in the way we respond.

## How Does the Fruit of the Spirit of Gentleness Work?

The Fruit of the Spirit of gentleness is developed within us as we submit to the Holy Spirit and align ourselves with the character of Christ. Gentleness works by influencing our interactions with others, and transforming how we approach conflicts, relationships, and leadership. Here's how it functions:

1. **By the Empowerment of the Holy Spirit:** Like all the Fruits of the Spirit, gentleness is not something we naturally produce on our own. It is developed in us as we remain connected to God and yield to His guidance. The more we depend on the Holy Spirit, the more we grow in gentleness.
2. **In Relationships:** Gentleness manifests in how we handle difficult people, tense situations, or disagreements. Instead of responding with harshness, frustration, or impatience, the Fruit of gentleness enables us to respond with calmness, understanding, and a peaceful attitude.
3. **Through Self-Control:** Gentleness doesn't mean avoiding conflict or standing idly by when action is needed. Rather, it means responding with patience and control, even when we have the right to react strongly. For example, Jesus demonstrated gentleness when He confronted the adulterous woman's accusers by saying, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone" (John 8:7). He didn't condone the sin but chose a measured, compassionate response.
4. **In Leadership:** Gentleness is essential for Christian leadership. Leaders who exhibit this trait do not force their will or act out of pride. Instead, they lead with compassion, recognizing the needs of others and considering their weaknesses. Jesus, described as a gentle shepherd, modeled this type of leadership by caring for His followers rather than ruling with an iron fist (Matthew 11:29).

## Why Is Gentleness Needed?

1. **Reflects Christ's Character:** Gentleness is a fundamental aspect of Christ's nature. In Matthew 11:29, Jesus invites us to "learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart." As His followers, we are called to reflect His character, and gentleness is key to representing Him well. It demonstrates a heart that is humble, compassionate, and filled with love.
2. **Promotes Peace and Unity:** Gentleness is needed to foster peace in our relationships. When we respond with gentleness, we diffuse anger, avoid unnecessary conflict, and build an environment of trust and respect. In Proverbs 15:1, we read that "a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Gentleness acts as a peacemaker in volatile situations, helping to maintain unity among people.
3. **Builds Strong Relationships:** Relationships thrive on kindness, understanding, and patience—qualities closely related to gentleness. Without gentleness, our words and actions can become cutting, hurtful, or dismissive. Gentleness allows us to approach others with a compassionate heart, strengthening our bonds and creating healthy, loving relationships.
4. **Heals and Restores:** Gentleness has the power to bring healing in situations of conflict or emotional hurt. When someone is struggling, whether physically or emotionally, a gentle approach can provide comfort and restoration. Harshness often exacerbates wounds, but gentleness can soothe and rebuild trust. This is why Paul encourages believers in Galatians 6:1 to restore others who are caught in sin "gently," recognizing the need for grace and care in the restoration process.
5. **Displays Strength and Wisdom:** It takes great strength to be gentle in situations that call for harshness or where we may feel justified in being aggressive. A gentle person demonstrates wisdom by exercising restraint and responding in a way that

honors God. In James 3:17, we are told that wisdom from above is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits.” Gentleness is a sign of spiritual maturity and wisdom.

## **The Purpose of Gentleness**

1. **To Reveal God's Heart:** The primary purpose of gentleness is to reflect God's heart to the world. As Christians, we are called to be ambassadors of Christ, and part of this calling is to embody His gentleness in a world that often values harshness and aggression. Gentleness shows others the love, patience, and kindness of God.
2. **To Be a Witness:** Gentleness is a powerful witness to the Gospel. In 1 Peter 3:15-16, believers are instructed to always be ready to give an answer for the hope that they have, but to do so “with gentleness and respect.” People are more receptive to the truth when it is delivered with care, kindness, and respect, rather than in a combative or judgmental manner.
3. **To Cultivate Humility:** Gentleness helps us cultivate humility, recognizing that we are no better than others and that all people deserve to be treated with dignity. It reminds us that our strength comes from God, not ourselves, and that we are to serve others in love, not dominate them with force or pride.
4. **To Bring Healing and Reconciliation:** Gentleness plays a crucial role in healing broken relationships and bringing reconciliation where there has been conflict. It opens the door for forgiveness and restoration, as it disarms defensiveness and encourages open, honest communication. The gentle person is quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry (James 1:19).

## Conclusion

The Fruit of the Spirit of gentleness is an essential virtue that reflects the character of Christ and shapes how we interact with others. It is strength under control—marked by humility, patience, and a compassionate spirit. Gentleness is not weakness, but rather the ability to respond to situations with grace, kindness, and wisdom. It fosters peace, builds strong relationships, and serves as a powerful witness to the Gospel. In a world often filled with harshness and pride, gentleness stands out as a force for healing, reconciliation, and love.

NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# JOY

## **An Informative and Entertaining Look**

Imagine you're standing in front of a lemonade stand on a scorching hot day. You've just had a rough morning—your coffee spilled, your meeting ran over, and the air conditioning in your car decided to quit. But there's something about that glass of lemonade that instantly lifts your spirits. It's refreshing, satisfying, and somehow, even in all the chaos, it brings a smile to your face. That feeling, my friend, is a little taste of what joy is like—but with a spiritual twist.

The biblical concept of **joy** is much deeper than a quick sip of lemonade on a hot day. Joy is a lasting, soul-deep happiness that is rooted not in circumstances, but in our relationship with God. It's one of the nine Fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23, and just like any fruit, it takes time to grow and flourish in our lives. So, let's dive in and explore what this wonderful Fruit of the Spirit really is, how it works, why it's so essential, and why we need it like we need air in our lungs.

## **What Is Joy? Defining the Fruit**

When we talk about **joy** as a Fruit of the Spirit, we're not just talking about being happy because everything is going our way. Biblical joy is a confident and steadfast delight that flows from our connection with God. It's the assurance that, no matter what life throws at us, God is in control, and that His plans for us are good. It's deeper than happiness, which comes and goes depending on external factors. Joy is like an underground spring that keeps bubbling up in our hearts, even when the world around us is parched.



You might call joy "**divine delight**," or even "**unshakable gladness**." It's a gift from the Holy Spirit that allows us to stay anchored, no matter how stormy life gets. Think of it this way: while happiness is like a balloon that rises and falls with the wind, joy is like a rock that stays firmly planted, no matter how strong the wind blows.

### **How Does Joy Work?**

The Fruit of the Spirit of joy doesn't just show up in our lives like an unexpected Amazon package (although, wouldn't that be nice?). It works from the inside out, transforming our perspective on life. It's something that grows as we deepen our relationship with God and trust Him more.

Here's how joy works in a practical sense:

1. **Joy Comes from God's Presence:** Psalm 16:11 says, "In Your presence is fullness of joy." Joy is a byproduct of being close to God. The more time we spend with Him—through prayer, worship, and meditating on His Word—the more our hearts are filled with joy. It's like soaking in sunlight. The longer you're in the sun, the warmer you get. The longer you're in God's presence, the more joy you experience.
2. **Joy is Fueled by Trust:** Joy kicks into high gear when we trust that God is in control, even when life feels out of control. Have you ever been on a road trip where the GPS keeps rerouting you? You get a little frustrated, but you trust the GPS knows what it's doing. Joy works the same way. When we trust that God knows where He's taking us, even if the route changes, we can still experience joy along the journey.
3. **Joy Transcends Circumstances:** The beautiful thing about joy is that it doesn't disappear when we're facing difficulties. In fact, the apostle Paul writes about being "sorrowful, yet

always rejoicing” (2 Corinthians 6:10). Joy isn’t tied to whether we’re having a good day or a bad day—it’s tied to the unchanging truth that God is good, and He’s with us in every situation. It’s the ability to say, "Things might not be perfect, but I know the One who holds everything together."

4. **Joy Strengthens Us:** There’s a famous verse in Nehemiah 8:10 that says, “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” Joy gives us the endurance to face life’s challenges with hope. When we’re filled with joy, we have a supernatural strength that helps us press on, even when things are tough. It’s like getting a second wind during a marathon. You might feel exhausted, but joy gives you that extra boost to keep running.

### **Why Is Joy Needed?**

Now, you might be wondering, “Why is joy such a big deal? Can’t I just get by with a little bit of happiness here and there?” Well, let me tell you why joy is absolutely essential, especially for believers.

1. **Joy Keeps Us Resilient:** Life is full of ups and downs, and without joy, we can quickly find ourselves discouraged or overwhelmed. Joy acts like a buoy that keeps us afloat in stormy seas. When things go wrong (and let’s be real, they will), joy helps us bounce back faster. It keeps us from sinking into despair.
2. **Joy is a Testimony:** The world is watching how we handle life. When people see us walking through difficult times with genuine joy, it’s a powerful testimony. It makes them wonder, "What do they have that I don’t have?" Joy is contagious. It sparks curiosity in others and points them to the source—God Himself.

3. **Joy Guards Our Hearts:** Proverbs 17:22 says, “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.” Joy is like a spiritual immune system—it protects us from bitterness, envy, and hopelessness. When we allow joy to fill our hearts, we’re less likely to be weighed down by the negativity that surrounds us. It keeps our spirits healthy, and our minds focused on the bigger picture.
4. **Joy Fuels Our Faith:** It’s hard to stay hopeful when you’re running on empty. But when we’re filled with joy, it’s like having a tank full of fuel for our faith. Joy helps us keep believing that God is working behind the scenes, even when we can’t see it. It reminds us that our story isn’t over yet, and that good things are still ahead.

### **Joy's Ultimate Purpose: Connection and Witness**

So, what’s the ultimate purpose of this Fruit of the Spirit called joy? It’s not just about making us feel good (though that’s a nice bonus!). The purpose of joy is twofold:

1. **To Connect Us to God:** Joy draws us closer to God because it reminds us of who He is and what He’s done. It’s a constant reminder that no matter what happens, we belong to Him, and that brings us deep, unshakable joy.
2. **To Be a Light to Others:** Joy is like a beacon in a dark world. When we live with joy, we shine. We become a light in our workplaces, schools, and communities. People are drawn to the joy that’s inside us because it’s not dependent on circumstances—it’s anchored in something greater.

## Wrapping It Up: Joy for the Journey

Joy isn't something we muster up on our own. It's a gift from the Holy Spirit that grows as we walk with God. It gives us strength in hard times, resilience in challenges, and a testimony that draws others to Christ. It's more than just a fleeting emotion; it's a steady, enduring gladness that anchors our souls in the goodness of God.

So, next time life hands you a bitter lemon, don't just settle for lemonade. Instead, let joy—real, Spirit-filled joy—overflow in your heart, knowing that no matter what happens, God is in control, and He's working all things together for your good.

NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# KINDNESS

## The Power of Compassion in Action

Picture this: You're walking through a crowded city on a hectic Monday morning. People are rushing to work, faces focused on their phones, while the noise of the traffic adds to the chaos. Suddenly, amidst the hustle, you spot someone holding the door open for a stranger. It's a simple act, almost too small to notice, but it breaks through the busyness. There's something powerful in that moment—**kindness**.

In a world that's often fast-paced and self-focused, kindness stands out like a bright light in a dark room. And here's the thing: kindness is not just an occasional "nice" thing to do. It's a supernatural characteristic, a Fruit of the Spirit, as listed in Galatians 5:22. Kindness isn't about being a pushover or just doing random nice deeds; it's a purposeful, Spirit-led expression of God's heart through us.

So, let's break down what this Fruit of the Spirit called kindness really is, how it works, why we need it, and what purpose it serves in God's grand design.

### What is Kindness? A Heart that Reflects God's Compassion

At its core, **kindness** is showing goodness, compassion, and love to others without expecting anything in return. It's like taking a bit of God's heart and giving it to the people around you. The Greek word used for kindness in Galatians 5:22 is “**chrestotes**,” which means moral goodness, integrity, and a tender concern for others. In other words, it's not just doing nice things; it's about having a **genuine, compassionate spirit** that seeks to bless others.

Think of kindness as **love in action**. While love may be the driving force behind our behavior, kindness is how that love gets out into the world. It's the practical side of compassion. When Jesus talks about loving your neighbor (Mark 12:31), He's essentially talking about kindness—meeting needs, offering help, and caring for others with a selfless heart.

### **How Does Kindness Work?**

Now, kindness isn't something you switch on and off depending on how you feel that day. True kindness is fueled by the Holy Spirit, meaning it's **consistent** and comes from a deep well of God's love working through you.

1. **Kindness Starts with the Heart:** Kindness isn't just about external actions; it starts in the heart. It's an overflow of God's grace working in us. Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." That's the root of it: we are kind because God has shown incredible kindness to us. When you realize how much God has done for you, kindness becomes a natural response to others.
2. **Kindness Works in Every Situation:** The beauty of kindness is that it works anywhere. Whether it's helping a friend in need, offering a smile to a stranger, or forgiving someone who hurt you, kindness operates in all spheres of life. Proverbs 3:3-4 tells us to "Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man." When kindness is part of who you are, it shines through in all you do—at work, at home, with friends, and with strangers.

3. **Kindness is Unconditional:** One of the hardest parts about kindness is that it's unconditional. It doesn't wait for someone to earn it. Jesus says in Luke 6:35, "But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back." That's next-level kindness. It's easy to be kind to those who are kind to you, but the Fruit of the Spirit goes beyond what's easy. Kindness extends even to those who may not deserve it, because we recognize that **God's kindness toward us was undeserved too.**
4. **Kindness is Intentional:** True kindness doesn't happen by accident. It's intentional. It's choosing to slow down and notice the needs of others. It's deciding to take that extra step to make someone's day better. Colossians 3:12 calls us to clothe ourselves "with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." Think of it like putting on your clothes each day—you consciously decide to wear kindness wherever you go.

### **Why is Kindness Needed?**

In a world where people are often too busy, stressed, or self-absorbed to notice each other, kindness is like oxygen—it's essential to life. Here's why we desperately need it:

1. **Kindness Heals Wounds:** People are hurting. Whether it's emotional, physical, or spiritual pain, everyone you meet is carrying some kind of burden. Kindness is like a balm that soothes those wounds. Proverbs 12:25 says, "Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up." That simple word of encouragement or that thoughtful gesture can lift someone's spirits in ways you may never fully realize.
2. **Kindness Builds Relationships:** Kindness is the glue that holds relationships together. Without it, our interactions become cold,

transactional, and often filled with conflict. Ephesians 4:2 urges us to “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” When kindness is at the center of our relationships, it fosters trust, understanding, and closeness. It’s like a bridge that connects us to others.

3. **Kindness Reflects God’s Nature:** One of the most powerful reasons we need kindness is that it reflects who God is. Titus 3:4-5 says, “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.” God is kind, and when we show kindness, we mirror His character. Every act of kindness is an opportunity to reveal God’s love to the world.
4. **Kindness Counters Negativity:** We live in a world filled with negativity—arguments, division, and criticism. Kindness is like a reset button. It diffuses tension and changes the atmosphere. Romans 12:21 encourages us to “not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.” When someone lashes out at you, kindness can disarm them. It’s not weakness; its strength under control. Kindness breaks the cycle of negativity and brings peace.

### **What is the Purpose of Kindness?**

Kindness isn’t just about making people feel good (though that’s a great bonus!). It has a much bigger purpose in God’s kingdom.

1. **To Lead Others to Repentance:** One of the most profound purposes of kindness is that it can lead people to God. Romans 2:4 says, “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?” Just as God’s kindness draws us to Him, our kindness can draw others to seek



His love and forgiveness. Your small act of kindness could be the spark that opens someone's heart to God.

2. **To Spread God's Love:** Kindness is love in action. It's the tangible expression of God's love to the world. 1 Corinthians 13:4 starts with the simple statement, "Love is patient, love is kind." When we show kindness, we are embodying God's love in real, practical ways. It's one thing to tell people God loves them: it's another thing to **show** them through your actions.
3. **To Reflect Christ's Example:** Jesus Himself modeled kindness throughout His life. Whether He was healing the sick, feeding the hungry, or spending time with society's outcasts, Jesus showed kindness in everything He did. Mark 10:45 says, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." When we practice kindness, we are following in the footsteps of Christ, serving others selflessly just as He did.

### **Wrapping it Up: Kindness Changes the World**

Kindness may seem small, but it has the power to change the world—one person, one moment at a time. It starts with a heart that's transformed by God's love and overflows into action. Whether it's holding the door open for a stranger, forgiving someone who's wronged you, or offering a helping hand to someone in need, kindness is a powerful tool in God's hands.

The next time you're tempted to rush through life, remember that kindness isn't just a nice thing to do. It's a Fruit of the Spirit that reflects God's heart, heals wounds and opens the door for God's love to shine through you. So, go out and **spread kindness**—you never know how deeply it could impact someone's life.

# PEACE

## A Soul's Calm in the Chaos

Imagine this: you're driving down the highway in the middle of a massive thunderstorm. Rain is pouring so hard you can barely see out of the windshield, lightning is flashing in the sky, and the wind is pushing your car from side to side. But inside, you're calm. You know your tires are solid, your car is built to handle this, and you trust the road will eventually lead you to safety. That sense of calm despite the storm outside is a taste of what **peace**—real, biblical peace—is all about.

The world tells us peace comes when everything around us is serene: soft music playing, candles lit, no stress in sight. But the **Fruit of the Spirit of peace** goes far beyond that. It's not the absence of problems but the presence of God in the middle of them. Peace, as listed in Galatians 5:22, is a powerful gift from the Holy Spirit that keeps us steady when life's storms rage. Let's explore what this kind of peace is, how it works, why it's so necessary, and most importantly, why we can't live without it.

### What Is Peace? Defining the Fruit

**Peace** can be described as a deep, soul-level calm that comes from trusting God completely. The Hebrew word for peace, **shalom**, carries a sense of completeness, soundness, and well-being. It's not just a fleeting feeling of tranquility, but a wholeness that impacts every part of your life—your heart, your mind, your relationships, and your perspective on the future.

Peace is like an anchor. When the waves of life are tossing you around, this peace holds you in place. It keeps you from drifting into fear, anxiety, or doubt. In simpler terms, **peace is inner stability in a world of instability.** It's that unshakable calm that whispers, "It's going to be okay" when everything around you are shouting, "Panic!"

Jesus Himself offers this kind of peace. In John 14:27, He said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." His peace is not dependent on external circumstances; it's rooted in His character and promises.

### **How Does Peace Work?**

Peace works much like a protective shield around your heart and mind. But how exactly does it operate in our day-to-day lives? Let's break it down:

1. **Peace Begins with Reconciliation with God:** First and foremost, peace with God is where it all starts. Romans 5:1 tells us, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." When we accept Jesus as our Savior, our sins are forgiven, and our relationship with God is restored. That reconciliation creates the foundation for every other kind of peace we can experience. It's like clearing a blocked pipe—once the blockage is removed, the water can flow freely again. Peace flows from being in right standing with God.
2. **Peace Guards Our Hearts and Minds:** Philippians 4:7 gives us this beautiful promise: "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." When we trust God, His peace acts like a soldier standing guard over our emotions and thoughts.

It prevents us from getting overwhelmed by anxiety, fear, or doubt. Just like you might lock your doors at night to keep intruders out, peace locks out the emotional “intruders” that try to steal our joy and faith.

3. **Peace Grows Through Prayer and Trust:** In the verses just before Philippians 4:7, Paul tells us how to access this peace: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6). Prayer is the key to peace. When we bring our worries to God and trust Him with the outcome, peace grows. It’s like making a trade—you give God your stress, and He gives you His peace in return. Not a bad deal, right?
4. **Peace Restores Relationships:** Another powerful aspect of peace is how it helps us in our relationships with others. Ephesians 4:3 urges us to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” When peace is growing in our hearts, we’re better equipped to handle conflicts, forgive offenses, and seek harmony with those around us. Peace isn’t just personal; it spills over into our interactions, helping us be peacemakers.

### **Why Do We Need Peace?**

Now, you might be thinking, “That sounds nice, but do I really need this kind of peace?” The short answer is absolutely! Here’s why:

1. **Peace Keeps Us Grounded in Chaos:** Let’s be real—life is chaotic. Work deadlines, family issues, financial stress, health problems—it can all feel overwhelming. Without peace, we get tossed around by every storm that comes our way. But with peace, we stay grounded. Isaiah 26:3 says, “You will

keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.” Peace gives us the ability to stay calm and focused, even when the world is spinning out of control.

2. **Peace Frees Us from Anxiety:** How many sleepless nights have you spent worrying about things you can’t control? Peace frees us from that burden. When we learn to trust God with our future, our fears begin to fade. It’s not that challenges disappear, but peace shifts our perspective. We realize that we don’t have to carry everything on our own shoulders. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Peace is that divine rest that quiets our racing thoughts and soothes our troubled hearts.
3. **Peace Empowers Us to Make Wise Decisions:** Ever made a rash decision because you were stressed or panicked? (Guilty as charged!) Peace allows us to make decisions with clarity and wisdom. Colossians 3:15 tells us, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” When peace is in charge, we’re not driven by fear or pressure. We can take a step back, seek God’s guidance, and make choices that align with His will.
4. **Peace Reflects Christ to Others:** In a world filled with conflict, worry, and division, peace stands out. When we live with peace, it becomes a powerful testimony to those around us. People will notice that there’s something different about us—something unshakable. And when they ask how we can stay calm in the middle of life’s storms, we get to point them to Jesus, the Prince of Peace. As Matthew 5:9 says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” Peace isn’t just for us; it’s for the world to see God through us.

## **The Purpose of Peace: Stability and Witness**

So, what's the ultimate purpose of this Fruit of the Spirit called peace? Peace does more than just make us feel good on the inside (though that's a bonus!). Its purpose is twofold:

1. **To Give Us Stability:** Peace is like the roots of a tree. When life's winds start to blow, we don't topple over because we're rooted in God's peace. It gives us stability when everything else feels unstable. It anchors our souls and keeps us from drifting into fear, doubt, or despair.
2. **To Be a Witness to the World:** Our peace is one of the clearest ways we can reflect Christ to others. When people see us walking through tough times with a deep sense of calm, they'll want to know where that comes from. Peace opens the door for us to share the gospel—the good news that Jesus is our source of peace, no matter what's going on around us.

### **Wrapping It Up: Peace in Every Season**

The peace of God isn't a luxury—it's a necessity. It keeps us steady when life is shaky, guards our hearts from fear, and reflects Christ to the world around us. But peace doesn't come from having perfect circumstances; it comes from knowing and trusting the One who holds everything in His hands.

So, the next time life feels like a storm, remember peace isn't found in the absence of problems, but in the presence of God. Just like that calm driver in the thunderstorm, when we know that God is in control, we can navigate whatever comes our way with unshakable peace.

# FAITHFULNESS

## The Anchor of Steadfast Loyalty

Imagine you're standing by the ocean, watching the waves crash against a large, sturdy lighthouse. No matter how fierce the storm or how wild the wind is, that lighthouse stands firm. It never moves, never wavers. It's dependable, always there to guide ships safely to shore. That's what **faithfulness** looks like in the life of a believer—rock-solid, unshakeable loyalty and trustworthiness, no matter what life throws your way.

Faithfulness is one of the nine attributes of the Fruit of the Spirit, found in Galatians 5:22-23, and it plays a crucial role in our relationship with God and with others. It's more than just keeping your word; faithfulness reflects a heart that is consistent, loyal, and unwavering. Let's dive deeper into what this quality really is, how it works, why it's needed, and what purpose it serves, with plenty of Scripture to guide us.

### What is Faithfulness? A Definition of Steadfastness

Faithfulness is a combination of loyalty, dependability, and trustworthiness. In simpler terms, **it's being reliable and true to your word**, even when it's tough. When the Bible talks about faithfulness, the Greek word used is “**pistis**,” which refers to faith, trust, and conviction. It's about being so rooted in God that your actions and attitudes reflect His reliability and faithfulness.

But here's the thing: faithfulness is not something we muster up on our own. It's not just about being a person who keeps their promises (though that's important). It's about living in such a way that **we mirror**

**God's faithfulness** in our everyday lives. In 2 Timothy 2:13, Paul reminds us of God's nature: "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." God is the ultimate standard of faithfulness—**unfailing, unwavering, and ever-constant**—and as His children, we are called to reflect that same steadfastness.

### **How Does Faithfulness Work?**

Faithfulness operates on several levels—**faithfulness to God, to others, and to the calling** He has placed on our lives. And the engine that drives faithfulness is trust, both trusting God and being trustworthy ourselves.

1. **Faithfulness to God:** First and foremost, faithfulness is about our relationship with God. It's about trusting Him completely and staying loyal to Him, even when things don't make sense or when life gets hard. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." But faith doesn't just mean believing in God when things are going well; it means being faithful to Him through the storms, like Job, who remained loyal to God even after losing everything. Job's faithfulness was tested, but he never turned his back on God. That's the kind of faithfulness we're called to.
2. **Faithfulness to Others:** Faithfulness also extends to our relationships with people. It's about being reliable and trustworthy; someone others can count on. Proverbs 20:6 tells us, "Many claim to have unfailing love, but a faithful person who can find?" Faithfulness in our relationships means we're not flaky; we don't bail when things get tough. We stand by our friends, family, and loved ones, just as God stands by us.
3. **Faithfulness to Your Purpose:** Faithfulness isn't just about our relationships; it's also about **staying committed to the**



**purpose** and the work God has called us to. In Luke 16:10, Jesus says, “Whoever is faithful with very little will also be faithful with much.” This means that even when the tasks seem small or unimportant, faithfulness matters. How we handle the little things reveals how we’ll handle the bigger ones. The story of David is a prime example of this. Before he became king, David was a shepherd, faithfully caring for sheep. His faithfulness in the small things prepared him for greater things.

### **Why is Faithfulness Needed?**

In a world that often glorifies instant results and quick fixes, faithfulness is becoming a rare quality. Yet, it’s **desperately needed**—in our spiritual lives, our relationships, and our work.

1. **Faithfulness Builds Trust:** Trust is the bedrock of any relationship, whether it’s with God or with people. When you are faithful, others know they can rely on you. Proverbs 28:20 says, “A faithful person will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.” Faithfulness establishes a foundation of trust that leads to lasting relationships and long-term success.
2. **Faithfulness Honors God:** Our faithfulness isn’t just about doing the right thing; it’s about honoring God. When we stay committed to Him and to the responsibilities He’s given us, we are reflecting His character. 1 Corinthians 4:2 says, “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” God has entrusted us with talents, resources, and opportunities, and being faithful is how we steward those gifts well.

3. **Faithfulness Strengthens Endurance:** Life is full of trials and difficulties, and faithfulness is what keeps us grounded. James 1:12 tells us, “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.” Faithfulness gives us the endurance we need to persevere, even when things get tough.

### **What is the Purpose of Faithfulness?**

Faithfulness is essential in fulfilling God’s purpose for our lives. It’s the glue that holds us to our commitments, both to God and others, and it serves a much bigger role in the Kingdom of God.

1. **To Reflect God’s Character:** As mentioned earlier, God is **the ultimate example of faithfulness**. He never breaks a promise. He is always true to His Word. Deuteronomy 7:9 says, “Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; He is the faithful God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments.” When we are faithful, we reflect that same character. Our faithfulness becomes a testimony to others of God’s unchanging nature.
2. **To Fulfill God’s Promises:** Faithfulness is also tied to the fulfillment of God’s promises in our lives. Hebrews 10:23 encourages us to “hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.” When we remain faithful to God, we position ourselves to receive His promises. Think of Abraham, who waited years for the promise of Isaac. His faithfulness to God—despite delays and difficulties—led to the fulfillment of the promise.

3. **To Impact Others for the Kingdom:** Faithfulness is one of the ways God uses us to impact others. Matthew 25:21, in the Parable of the Talents, highlights how faithfulness in small things leads to greater responsibilities: “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” When we are faithful, God entrusts us with more influence and opportunities to impact His Kingdom.

### **Wrapping It Up: Faithfulness is a Journey, Not a Sprint**

Faithfulness is about **consistency, not perfection**. It’s about showing up every day, even when it’s hard, and trusting that God’s plan is bigger than our current situation. The Fruit of the Spirit of faithfulness grows in us as we continually trust God, act with integrity, and remain steadfast in our commitments.

Just like that sturdy lighthouse standing firm in the middle of the storm, your faithfulness is a beacon of hope in a world that often wavers. It points people to God, the ultimate source of unwavering faithfulness. So, next time you’re tempted to quit or let go of a promise, remember that faithfulness isn’t about the outcome—it’s about trusting the One who is always faithful to complete the good work He’s started in you (Philippians 1:6).

Faithfulness may not always be flashy, but it’s a quality that leaves a lasting legacy. As you walk in faithfulness, you’ll not only honor God but also pave the way for deeper relationships, fulfilled promises, and a life that reflects the unwavering love of our faithful Father.

# PATIENCE

## The Power of Waiting Well

Imagine planting a seed in your garden. You water it, tend to the soil, and watch for it to sprout. But days, maybe even weeks, go by with no sign of growth. It's tempting to dig it up and check if it's working. But any good gardener knows that growth takes time. You can't rush the process—you need patience.

That's exactly how the Fruit of the Spirit of **patience** works in our lives. It's like the unseen growth of that seed, slow and steady, teaching us to wait with grace and trust. Galatians 5:22 lists patience as one of the nine fruits of the Spirit, a quality that is more than just waiting for something to happen—it's about **how** we wait and **why** we wait.

In a fast-paced world that glorifies instant results, patience is a rare gem, and yet, it's essential for our spiritual growth, relationships, and purpose. So, let's dig into what biblical patience really means, how it works, why it's crucial, and what it's meant to produce in our lives.

### What is Patience? A Definition of Endurance

When we think of patience, we often imagine waiting for something without losing our temper. And that's part of it, but biblical patience goes much deeper. The Greek word for patience used in Galatians 5:22 is “**makrothumia**,” which translates to “long-suffering” or “forbearance.” It's the ability to endure hardships, delays, or annoyances without giving up or lashing out.

But patience is more than passive waiting—it's **active trust** in God's timing. It's the ability to endure the tough stuff while holding onto hope. Romans 12:12 encourages us to “be joyful in hope, patient in

affliction, faithful in prayer.” This isn’t the kind of patience where we twiddle our thumbs and wait for the clock to tick down. It’s a deliberate choice to persevere with grace, even when things get hard.

### **How Does Patience Work?**

Patience operates in our lives through **endurance, trust, and perspective**. It’s like a muscle that grows stronger every time we use it, especially in situations that challenge our sense of control. Here’s how patience works on a practical level:

1. **Endurance Through Trials:** Life is full of tests, setbacks, and delays. Biblical patience isn’t just about putting up with these trials; it’s about persevering through them without losing faith. James 1:2-4 tells us to “consider it pure joy... whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” Trials aren’t obstacles to our growth—they’re the very thing that refines us. Patience helps us to endure the process.
2. **Trust in God’s Timing:** Patience is ultimately about trusting that God’s timing is better than ours. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.” We may not always understand why things are taking so long, but patience reminds us that God is working behind the scenes. Think of Abraham, who waited 25 years for the promise of Isaac to be fulfilled. His patience wasn’t perfect—he had moments of doubt—but in the end, his faith and patience were rewarded. Hebrews 6:15 says, “And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.”

3. **Perspective in the Waiting:** Patience helps us shift our perspective from immediate gratification to eternal significance. When we're impatient, we want things to happen now, our way. But patience reminds us that **God sees the bigger picture**. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways." God's perspective is far higher than ours, and patience teaches us to trust that His ways are always best.

### **Why is Patience Needed?**

In a world where everything is instant—instant messages, instant downloads, even instant coffee—patience is a counter-cultural necessity. It's needed because it shapes our character, deepens our trust in God, and transforms our relationships.

1. **Patience Builds Character:** Romans 5:3-4 tells us that "suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." Patience is the cornerstone of personal growth. Without it, we're easily discouraged, prone to quitting when things get hard. But patience helps us develop resilience, strength, and character over time. Like that seed in the ground, it might take time to see the growth, but it's happening beneath the surface.
2. **Patience Deepens Our Faith:** Faith and patience go hand-in-hand. Hebrews 6:12 urges us to "imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised." Think of all the biblical heroes who waited—Joseph in prison, Moses in the wilderness, Hannah for a child. Their faith was stretched, but their patience allowed them to see the fulfillment of God's promises. Patience teaches us that delays aren't denials, and God's plan is always worth the wait.

3. **Patience Transforms Relationships:** Patience isn't just about waiting on God; it's also essential for healthy relationships with others. Ephesians 4:2 encourages us to "be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." In relationships, patience helps us navigate conflict, forgive offenses, and show grace to others, just as God shows grace to us. Proverbs 19:11 says, "A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense." Patience is needed to love well.

### **What is the Purpose of Patience?**

Patience serves a greater purpose in the Kingdom of God. It's not just about enduring tough times with a smile on your face; it's about **aligning your heart with God's will** and allowing Him to work in and through you.

1. **To Grow Us Spiritually:** Patience is one of the keyways God matures us. As we wait on Him, we're forced to let go of our need for control and surrender to His timing. James 1:4 reminds us, "Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." The longer we wait, the more we grow in trust, humility, and dependence on God.
2. **To Show God's Glory:** Our patience in the waiting seasons of life points people to God. When we trust Him, even when things don't make sense, we demonstrate faith that goes beyond circumstances. The world notices when someone waits well, and that patience can lead others to ask, "What's different about you?" Patience, then, becomes a testimony to God's faithfulness.

3. **To Prepare Us for Greater Things:** Patience isn't passive; it's active preparation. Just like a farmer waits for the harvest, knowing the seed is working beneath the soil, patience prepares us for future blessings. Galatians 6:9 encourages us, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." The purpose of patience is to position us to receive what God has in store for us, in His perfect timing.

### **Wrapping It Up: Patience is the Long Game**

Patience is more than just waiting for the next thing to happen. It's about **how** we wait and **who** we're becoming in the process. It's a divine invitation to trust God more deeply, to let go of our timeline and embrace His. Like the gardener who waits for the seed to sprout, we might not see the results right away, but we can trust that growth is happening beneath the surface.

Remember, patience isn't about waiting in frustration; it's about waiting with hope, trust, and expectation. So, the next time you find yourself in a season of waiting, take a breath and remember: God's timing is perfect, and patience is part of the journey. Like a good farmer, tend to the soil, water the seed, and trust that in due season, you'll see the harvest. And in the meantime, enjoy the ride—because waiting well is a gift that will serve you all your life.

NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# GOODNESS

## More Than Just Being "Nice"

Goodness—now there's a word we use a lot, right? We say, "Oh, he's a good guy," or "She's a good person," but do we ever stop to really think about what it means to be "good"? Is it just being nice? Polite? Doing the right thing when people are watching? Well, when the Bible talks about **goodness** as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), it's a lot more than just being "nice." It's about reflecting the heart of God in the world around us, living a life that stands out not because it's easy, but because it's powered by something supernatural.

So, what is goodness? How does it work in our lives? Why do we need it? And most importantly, what's its purpose? Let's explore this concept of goodness from a biblical perspective, and I promise, you'll walk away with a clearer picture of why this fruit of the Spirit is so vital in a world that desperately needs it.

### What is Goodness? More Than Surface-Level Morality

First, let's define **goodness** from a biblical perspective. The word used in Galatians 5:22 for goodness is "**agathosune**," which refers to an intrinsic goodness that comes from God. It's a goodness that isn't just about being morally upright, but also about being **generous**, **kind**, and **actively pursuing what is right** in a world that can be deeply flawed. It's not the "good" you see in fairy tales where the hero always wins because he's on the side of good. It's a lot grittier than that—it's choosing to do what's right, even when it's hard, even when no one's looking, and even when it costs you something.

Biblical goodness isn't about perfection. In fact, it's about being so connected to the heart of God that His goodness flows through us into the world. That's why Paul wasn't talking about some feel-good, surface-level morality. He was talking about a goodness that reflects **God's character**—a goodness that's powerful, transformational, and deeply needed.

### How Does Goodness Work?

Goodness works in our lives by **aligning our hearts with God's**. It's not something we can muster up on our own; it's a result of the Holy Spirit working in us, shaping our desires, our actions, and our decisions.

1. **Goodness Starts with the Heart:** Jesus said in Luke 6:45, “A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart.” This tells us that goodness is an **inside job**. It's not just about doing good things; it's about **being** good at your core. The Holy Spirit plants goodness in our hearts, and as we grow in our relationship with God, that goodness starts to show up in the way we treat others, the choices we make, and the way we live our lives.
2. **Goodness is Active, Not Passive:** Goodness isn't a passive trait—it's **action-oriented**. It's not enough to just avoid doing bad things; we're called to **actively do good**. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” That's right—God has specific good works prepared for each of us to walk in! So, goodness is something that works its way into our everyday actions, from the big life decisions to the small, seemingly insignificant moments.
3. **Goodness is Powered by the Spirit:** The key here is that **goodness isn't something we produce on our own**. It's the

fruit of the Spirit. It grows in us as we grow in our relationship with God. The more time we spend with Him, the more our hearts are transformed, and the more natural it becomes to reflect His goodness to others. Like any fruit, goodness needs to be cultivated. We water it by staying connected to God through prayer, reading His Word, and following His lead.

### **Why is Goodness Needed?**

Now, why do we need goodness? After all, aren't there plenty of good people in the world who don't even know God? Well, the goodness the Bible talks about goes beyond social morality or doing the right thing out of obligation. It's needed because it brings light into a dark world.

1. **Goodness Reflects God's Character:** In a world that's often self-centered, where people are more concerned with their own interests than the needs of others, goodness stands out. Matthew 5:16 tells us to "let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Our goodness is a reflection of God's goodness, and when we live that way, people take notice. It's not about earning brownie points with God or others—it's about pointing people to Him through our lives.
2. **Goodness Counters Evil:** Romans 12:21 says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." The truth is, we live in a broken world where evil often seems to have the upper hand. But the fruit of goodness in our lives can counteract that evil. It's not a passive resistance, but an active overcoming. When we choose to do good—especially when it's hard, especially when we're hurt, especially when it doesn't make sense—we are pushing back against the darkness and bringing God's kingdom to earth.

3. **Goodness Builds Community:** Finally, goodness is needed to build healthy, thriving communities. When we choose goodness over selfishness, generosity over greed, and kindness over cruelty, we create environments where people can flourish. Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” Doing good isn’t just about being nice to the people who are nice to us—it’s about creating a culture of goodness that reflects God’s heart.

### **What is the Purpose of Goodness?**

Goodness has a higher purpose in God’s plan. It’s not just about living a nice, moral life. The purpose of goodness is to **make God known** and to **transform the world around us**.

1. **To Be a Witness:** Our goodness isn’t about drawing attention to ourselves; it’s about pointing people to God. When we live with a heart of goodness, people see something different in us. Jesus said in John 13:35, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Goodness is a witness to the world that we belong to Jesus.
2. **To Transform Lives:** Goodness has a ripple effect. When we choose to do good, especially in difficult situations, it impacts the people around us. Proverbs 11:17 says, “Those who are kind benefit themselves, but the cruel bring ruin on themselves.” Goodness blesses others, but it also blesses us in return. It creates a cycle of blessing that has the power to transform lives and communities.
3. **To Fulfill God’s Plan:** Finally, the purpose of goodness is to fulfill God’s plan for our lives. Ephesians 2:10 reminds us that we were created to do good works—this is part of our divine

calling! We aren't just saved to sit back and wait for heaven; we're saved to **actively participate** in God's mission to redeem and restore the world. Goodness is one of the keyways we do that.

### **Wrapping It Up: The Power of Goodness**

Goodness isn't just about being a "good person" in the way the world might define it. It's about being a reflection of God's goodness to a world in need of hope, healing, and light. It's the active pursuit of what is right, even when it's hard. It's the choice to live out God's character in a world that often chooses the opposite.

So, as you go about your day, remember that the fruit of the Spirit of goodness is more than just being "nice." It's a powerful tool that God uses to transform lives, overcome evil, and draw people to Himself. The next time you're faced with the choice between doing what's easy and doing what's right, lean into the goodness that the Holy Spirit is growing in you. Let your light shine and watch how God uses your goodness to make a difference in the world around you.

NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# SELF- CONTROL

## The Power of Saying “No” (When You Really Want to Say “Yes”)

Let’s be real for a second—self-control? It’s not exactly a word that makes us jump out of our seats with excitement. It might sound like something your parents or teachers drilled into you growing up. "Have some self-control!" they’d say, and suddenly all the fun went out of the room. But here’s the thing: **self-control is actually one of the most powerful, life-changing fruits of the Spirit** (Galatians 5:22-23), and when you really understand it, you’ll see that it’s not about limiting your life, but about unlocking true freedom.

So, what exactly is **self-control**? How does it work? Why do we need it so badly, and what is its purpose in our lives? Let’s dive into these questions, but I promise, we’ll keep it practical, with some strong biblical insights—and maybe even a few laughs along the way. After all, even serious topics need a little light-heartedness to help them sink in.

### What is Self-Control?

Self-control is the ability to govern our actions, desires, and impulses. It’s not about denying ourselves every little joy in life; rather, it’s about **choosing what’s best** over what’s easy or tempting in the moment. The Greek word used for self-control in Galatians 5 is “**egkrateia**,” which means to have mastery or control over oneself. But this isn’t a grit-

your-teeth, willpower-only type of control. It's Spirit-powered self-discipline, rooted in a desire to honor God with our lives.

Think of self-control as the steering wheel of a car. The car itself represents our emotions, desires, and impulses. Without self-control, the car is a wild ride, zigzagging all over the road, maybe even crashing into things. But when the Holy Spirit helps us take hold of that wheel, suddenly we have direction, purpose, and safety on the road of life.

### **How Does Self-Control Work?**

Self-control isn't something we naturally have a lot of. In fact, if you've ever tried to avoid the cookie jar after deciding whether to eat healthily or to keep calm when someone is pushing all your buttons, you know it's not easy! But here's where the fruit of the Spirit comes in. Self-control is **something God grows in us** as we stay connected to Him. It's not about gritting our teeth and trying harder; it's about being so rooted in our relationship with Jesus that we begin to reflect His character.

1. **Self-Control Starts with Surrender:** One of the biggest secrets to self-control is that it doesn't start with trying harder—it starts with surrendering to God. Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us to "trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight." When we submit our desires, choices, and impulses to God, He helps us make better decisions.
2. **Self-Control is a Process:** Just like you don't wake up one day as a world-class athlete without years of training, self-control takes time to develop. Philippians 2:13 reminds us that "it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose." The Holy Spirit works with us, step

by step, decision by decision, helping us say no to the wrong things and yes to the right things.

3. **Self-Control Empowers Freedom:** Now, this is where things get really interesting. The world often tells us that freedom means doing whatever we want, whenever we want. But biblical self-control flips that idea upside down. Real freedom doesn't come from indulging every desire; it comes from being free from the things that enslave us—whether that's unhealthy habits, toxic relationships, or even our own impulses. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (some translations say "self-discipline"). True self-control brings true freedom.

### **Why is Self-Control Needed?**

So why do we need self-control? Can't we just rely on our good intentions? Well, let's be honest. **Good intentions only take us so far.** We need self-control because, without it, our lives can spiral out of control faster than we realize.

1. **Self-Control Protects Us from Regret:** Proverbs 25:28 says, "Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control." Think about that, for a second—a city without walls is totally vulnerable to attack, easily overrun by enemies. That's what it's like when we lack self-control. We're wide open to making decisions we'll regret, whether it's in our relationships, our finances, our health, or even our spiritual lives. Self-control builds protective boundaries that keep us from making choices we'll wish we could undo later.
2. **Self-Control Helps Us Reflect Jesus:** In a world that often feels out of control, people are looking for something (or



someone) steady and reliable. When we walk in self-control, we show others what it means to live a life that's different—not because we're trying to impress anyone, but because we're letting God shape us. Jesus modeled this perfectly during His time on earth. Even under immense pressure—think about when He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11)—He showed perfect self-control by standing firm in God's Word.

3. **Self-Control Sets Us Up for Success:** Have you ever noticed that the most successful people, whether in business, sports, or life in general, are the ones who've mastered self-control? They don't give in to every distraction or temptation that comes their way. The same is true in our spiritual lives. Proverbs 16:32 says, "Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city." The ability to rule over your own spirit is more valuable than winning any external battle.

### **What is the Purpose of Self-Control?**

The purpose of self-control goes way beyond just helping us stay out of trouble. It plays a huge role in **helping us become the people God created us to be**. Here's why self-control is so important:

1. **Self-Control Helps Us Live Out God's Best:** God has a plan for each of our lives, and self-control helps us stay on the path He's laid out for us. When we're able to control our impulses and desires, we're more in tune with His guidance and more likely to step into the opportunities He places in front of us. Remember, we were created for good works (Ephesians 2:10), but self-control is what helps us stay focused long enough to walk in them.

2. **Self-Control Leads to Spiritual Growth:** The more we exercise self-control, the more we grow spiritually. It's like a muscle that gets stronger the more we use it. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 compares the Christian life to a race where we have to exercise self-discipline in order to win the prize. The goal isn't just to get through life but to **run it in a way that honors God** and bears fruit that lasts.
3. **Self-Control Prepares Us for Eternity:** At the end of the day, self-control is about living with eternity in mind. 1 Peter 1:13 encourages us to "prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed." Self-control helps us focus on what really matters—God's kingdom—and not get sidetracked by the temporary pleasures and distractions of this world.

### **Wrapping It Up: The Power of Self-Control**

Self-control isn't about saying "no" for the sake of saying no. It's about saying "no" to the things that will pull us away from God so we can say "yes" to the things that bring us closer to Him. It's the fruit of the Spirit that empowers us to live with purpose, avoid regrets, and ultimately become more like Jesus.

So, the next time you find yourself wanting to take the easy way out, remember that self-control is your friend. It's not there to make your life harder—it's there to make your life richer, deeper, and more aligned with the amazing plans God has for you. And trust me, with the Holy Spirit working in you, you've got all the strength you need to stay on the path He's called you to walk.

# HOW TO CULTIVATE THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT IN OUR LIFE

Now that we have a better understanding of each fruit of the spirit and why they are important for our life as a Christian, we to explore how we can develop and cultivate each fruit in our life.

The fruit of the spirit provides the foundation we need to be able to live a life that reflects Christ. These virtues are not just spiritual ideals; they are characteristics that should shape our everyday lives. But here's the catch: they don't just show up by accident. Like any fruit, they need to be **cultivated**, and that requires intentional effort and reliance on God's Spirit.

### **Why Is It Important to Cultivate the Fruit of the Spirit?**

Before we dive into the “how,” let's talk about the “why.” Why should cultivating the fruit of the Spirit be a priority for us as Christians?

Here are three key reasons:

1. **It's evidence of Christ's presence in our lives:** Jesus said in **John 15:8** that, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” The fruit of the Spirit is the visible proof that God is working in us, making us more like Christ.
2. **It impacts our relationships:** The fruit of the Spirit affects how we relate to others—whether that's in our marriages, friendships, workplaces, or even with people who frustrate us. Imagine how different the world would be if every Christian was living out love, joy, peace, and patience!
3. **It transforms our own character:** These qualities are not just for outward appearances; they change who we are at the core. As we grow in the fruit of the Spirit, we experience the fullness of life that God desires for us—one marked by deep contentment, strong relationships, and purpose.

## How Do We Cultivate the Fruit of the Spirit?

Now, let's get practical. How do we, as Christians, intentionally cultivate this fruit in our lives? Here are five steps to guide us along the way with action steps you can take for each one.

### Step 1: Stay Connected to the Vine

Jesus couldn't have made it clearer in **John 15:5**: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing."

Think of it this way: the fruit of the Spirit isn't something we can grow through sheer willpower. It's not about trying harder or putting on a good face. The fruit is a **natural result of staying connected to Jesus**, the true vine. If we aren't regularly spending time with Him—through prayer, reading the Bible, and worship—the fruit of the Spirit can't flourish in our lives.

**Action step:** Make time every day to connect with God. It doesn't have to be complicated. Start with a simple prayer in the morning, meditate on a verse during your lunch break, or take a few moments to worship during your drive home. The more we stay connected to Christ, the more we allow His Spirit to work within us.

### Step 2: Walk by the Spirit

Paul's advice in **Galatians 5:16** is simple yet profound: "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." Walking by the Spirit means allowing God's Spirit to guide your decisions, actions, and reactions in every part of your life.

### How does this look in everyday life?

- It means responding with kindness when someone is rude.

- It means showing patience when everything in you wants to snap.
- It means choosing joy even when circumstances aren't perfect.

Walking by the Spirit requires **sensitivity to God's voice** and a willingness to follow His lead, even when it goes against our natural instincts.

**Action step:** Throughout your day, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in every situation. Start your morning by saying, “Holy Spirit, help me to follow your lead today. Help me to love, be patient, and show kindness in all that I do.”

### **Step 3: Embrace God's Pruning**

Here's the tough part. Growing fruit often involves pruning. In **John 15:2**, Jesus says that God prunes every branch that bears fruit so it will be even more fruitful. Sometimes, cultivating the fruit of the Spirit means **letting go of attitudes, habits, or even relationships that stunt our growth**.

Maybe it's a critical attitude that hinders love. Maybe it's an addiction to busyness that steals your peace. Maybe it's impatience with a coworker or a family member. Whatever it is, God might call us to let go of certain things so we can grow in new ways.

**Action step:** Ask God to show you areas in your life where pruning might be needed. Be open to making changes—whether it's giving up a toxic habit, adjusting your schedule to make more room for rest, or simply changing your mindset about a situation.

### **Step 4: Be Intentional in Relationships**

The fruit of the Spirit is all about how we live and relate to others. You can't practice love, patience, kindness, or gentleness in isolation.

God uses the people around us—especially the difficult ones—to help us grow in these areas.

### **How does this work?**

- Love is developed when we choose to love someone who's hard to love.
- Patience grows when we endure situations that test our limits.
- Kindness is cultivated when we go out of our way to help others.

**Action step:** Look for opportunities to practice the fruit of the Spirit with those around you. Maybe it's reaching out to someone in need, being patient with a difficult person, or simply showing joy in your interactions with others.

### **Step 5: Don't Grow Weary**

Here's where many of us struggle. Cultivating the fruit of the Spirit takes time, and we live in a world that wants instant results. But Paul encourages us in **Galatians 6:9**: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Developing character takes patience. The fruit of the Spirit grows over time, and often the most significant changes happen beneath the surface, where no one sees. But God promises that if we stay the course, we'll see the harvest.

**Action step:** Be patient with yourself as you grow. Spiritual fruit doesn't ripen overnight, but every small act of faithfulness, kindness, and patience makes a difference. Celebrate the progress, and trust that God is at work—even when it doesn't feel like it.

## **The Impact of Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit**

So, what happens when we intentionally cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in our lives? The impact is transformative:

1. **Deeper relationships:** When we live out love, joy, peace, and patience, our relationships flourish. People are drawn to the kindness and gentleness that reflect Christ's love.
2. **Greater influence:** The fruit of the Spirit sets us apart in a world filled with negativity, impatience, and selfishness. It gives us a platform to influence others for the Kingdom of God.
3. **Personal peace and fulfillment:** When the Spirit's fruit grows in us, we experience the abundant life Jesus promised. We're no longer ruled by our emotions, but by the peace, joy, and love that come from Him.

### **Conclusion**

Cultivating the fruit of the Spirit is a lifelong journey that requires our active cooperation with the Holy Spirit. It isn't about trying harder—it's about staying connected to Jesus, walking in step with the Spirit, and allowing God to shape us through His Word and relationships. This will not only transform us into people who reflect Christ, but it will enable us to be a blessing to others, pointing them to the power of God at work within us.

So, let's commit ourselves to this process, trusting that as we do, God will faithfully produce His fruit in our lives—for His glory and for the good of those around us.



# OTHER TYPES OF FRUIT IN THE BIBLE

In addition to the Fruit of the Spirit, the Bible mentions several other types of fruit that believers should develop and cultivate in their lives. We are going to cover three of them here, the fruit of good deeds, the fruit of praise, and the fruit of righteousness. We will explain what they are, how we can develop them in our lives, and provide some examples and analogies. Here we go.

## Fruit of Good Deeds

Good deeds are an essential part of bearing fruit as a Christian. In [Colossians 1:10](#), Paul writes, “*that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being **fruitful** in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*” Our actions should reflect our faith and bring glory to God.

Titus 3:14 emphasizes the importance of maintaining good works: “*And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.*” By meeting the needs of others through our good deeds, we demonstrate the love of Christ and bear fruit that points others to Him. So, in other words, when we bear the fruit of the Spirit in our life they will produce the fruit of good works. Good works are a by-product or result of the fruits of the spirit.

Think about a tree full of ripe, vibrant fruit. No one has to be convinced to enjoy its harvest—it's naturally inviting and beneficial. Similarly, the Bible teaches that good deeds are the fruit that grows from a life rooted in Christ. Just like physical fruit nourishes the body, good deeds nourish the world around us. They are the outward expression of an inward faith, revealing the transformative power of God in our lives.

But how do we define the *fruit of good deeds*? And how can we cultivate it in a way that reflects God's character? In this paper, we will explore the biblical foundation for good deeds, how Christians can develop them as fruit, and why this fruit is essential for living a Christ-centered life.

## What Are Good Deeds?

Good deeds, as described in the Bible, are the actions and behaviors that reflect God's love, mercy, and righteousness in practical ways. They're not just random acts of kindness—they are purposeful actions that flow from a heart transformed by the Holy Spirit. Good deeds are the natural outpouring of a life connected to Christ, reflecting the character of God through generosity, service, compassion, and love.

- Ephesians 2:10: *“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*
- Matthew 5:16: *“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

Notice how these verses connect good deeds to our identity as God's *handiwork* and as light in the world. Our good deeds aren't about earning favor or proving our worth; they are simply the visible fruit of God's work in us.

### The Biblical Foundation for Good Deeds

The Bible places a high value on good deeds, not as a means to salvation but as evidence of a life transformed by faith. Jesus made this clear when He taught that a good tree bears good fruit (Matthew 7:17-18). Similarly, in James 2:26, we read that *“faith without works is dead.”* This means that true faith is always accompanied by action—by good deeds that bless others and glorify God.

#### Analogy:

Imagine a lamp with no bulb. The purpose of a lamp is to shine light, but without a bulb, it cannot fulfill its function. Similarly, faith without good deeds is like a lamp with no light—it lacks visible evidence of its purpose. Good deeds are the light that shines from our lives, illuminating God's goodness for the world to see.

## How to Cultivate the Fruit of Good Deeds

The fruit of good deeds, like any fruit, requires cultivation. It doesn't grow overnight, nor does it flourish without intentional effort. Let's look at three key steps to developing a life that consistently bears the fruit of good deeds.

### 1. Abide in Christ

Just as fruit can't grow without a healthy tree, good deeds cannot flourish apart from a connection to Christ. Jesus said, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). When we remain in Christ—through prayer, studying His Word, and living in obedience to Him—our lives naturally produce good deeds as a byproduct of His work in us.

- John 15:8: *"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*

### Illustration:

Think of a branch attached to a grapevine. As long as it remains connected to the vine, it will produce fruit. But if it's cut off, the branch withers, and no fruit grows. Similarly, when we stay connected to Jesus, the natural result is the production of good deeds that glorify God and serve others.

### 2. Be Intentional in Serving Others

Good deeds often require intentionality. They're not always spontaneous—sometimes they involve planning, sacrifice, and effort. The Bible encourages us to look for opportunities to do good, especially to those in need.

- Galatians 6:9-10: *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."*

This passage reminds us that good deeds can sometimes be exhausting, but we are called to persevere. Why? Because there's a harvest coming—a harvest of transformed lives, blessings for others, and glory for God.

### **Analogy:**

Think of planting a garden. At first, the ground may be hard, and the seeds take time to grow. But with perseverance, watering, and care, the garden eventually produces a harvest. In the same way, doing good for others may not always yield immediate results, but with persistence, the fruit will come in due season.

### **3. Let Your Motivation Be Love**

True good deeds are motivated by love, not obligation. They flow from a heart that genuinely cares for others and desires to reflect God's love in practical ways. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:3, *"If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing."* Our good deeds are meaningless if they're not rooted in love.

- 1 John 3:18: *"Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."*

This verse challenges us to go beyond words and express our love through actions. Good deeds become powerful when they are expressions of genuine love and care for others.

### **Illustration:**

Consider a beautifully wrapped gift. No matter how fancy the wrapping, the true value of the gift lies in what's inside. Likewise, our good deeds may appear impressive on the outside, but if they're not motivated by love, they lack real substance. Love is the heart of every good deed.

### **The Impact of Good Deeds**

When Christians cultivate the fruit of good deeds, the impact reaches far beyond just the recipient. Good deeds not only meet practical needs

but also point people to the source of all goodness—God Himself. Jesus taught that our good deeds should lead others to glorify God (Matthew 5:16). When we live out our faith through acts of kindness, generosity, and service, we become living testimonies of God's love.

- Titus 3:14: *“Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.”*

Good deeds aren't just nice things we do—they're an essential part of a productive, fruitful Christian life.

### **Analogy:**

Think of a ripple effect in a pond. When you throw a stone into the water, the ripples spread far beyond the point of impact. Similarly, one good deed can create ripples that extend into the lives of others, influencing them in ways you may never see. Your act of kindness could inspire someone else to do the same, creating a chain reaction of goodness that ultimately points back to God.

### **Summary**

Notice how various fruits of the spirit are involved in producing the fruit of good deeds. Good deeds are more than just a moral obligation—it's the natural result of a life transformed by Christ. When we stay connected to Him, serve others with intentionality, and let love be our motivation, good deeds become a powerful testimony of God's work in our lives. As we cultivate this fruit, we reflect God's character to the world around us, drawing others to Him and fulfilling the purpose for which we were created.

Good deeds are the visible expression of an invisible faith. So, let's be intentional in planting seeds of goodness in every area of our lives, knowing that in due season, we will reap a harvest for God's glory. And remember—every act of kindness, no matter how small, has the potential to make an eternal impact.

# The Fruit of Praise

When we praise God we are bearing fruit. Praising God is just another way we can bear fruit. Hebrews 13:15 says, “*Hence by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.*” When we praise God, we acknowledge His goodness and express our gratitude for all He has done.

The Psalms are filled with examples of offering praise to God. Psalm 34:1 declares, “*I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*” As we make praise a regular part of our lives, we bear fruit that honors and glorifies God.

## What is the Fruit of Praise

Praise is more than a moment of singing songs in church—it’s a way of life, a spiritual discipline, and a fruit that every Christian is called to cultivate. When we talk about the “fruit of praise,” we’re referring to an outward expression of an inward posture of gratitude, trust, and worship. Like the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), the fruit of praise is evidence of a life deeply rooted in Christ.

So, what is praise, and how can we grow it as Christians? Let’s explore this from a biblical perspective and walk through some key insights, illustrations, and Scripture.

### 1. Praise as Acknowledging God’s Greatness

At its core, praise is about recognizing and declaring who God is. In the Psalms, we see David repeatedly praising God for His character—His goodness, mercy, power, and love. Psalm 145:3 (NIV) says, “Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.”

Think of praise like shining a spotlight on God. Imagine being in a theatre where the spotlight illuminates the actor on stage, drawing attention to the performance. Praise is like that spotlight, focusing on God’s “performance” in our lives. It shifts our attention away

from our struggles, circumstances, or worries and places it firmly on God's faithfulness, majesty, and sovereignty.

To develop this fruit of praise, we need to consistently "turn on the spotlight" in our daily lives. That means practicing praise not only in the good times but also when things are tough. Consider the story of Paul and Silas in Acts 16:25. Even after being beaten and thrown in prison, they prayed and sang hymns to God. The result? God showed up, and a miraculous earthquake set them free!

**Application:** Start by incorporating praise into your prayer life. Make it a habit to acknowledge God's greatness before you present your requests. Even when you don't feel like praising, choose to do it anyway. You'll be amazed at how this practice shifts your focus and strengthens your faith.

## **2. Praise as Gratitude for What God Has Done**

Praise is also an expression of gratitude. When we praise, we're thanking God for what He's done. This goes beyond a simple "thank you" after a meal; it's a deep sense of appreciation for God's grace, provision, and salvation. Psalm 103:2 (NIV) says, "Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

Imagine a child receiving a gift from a parent. The child's natural response is to say, "Thank you!" Similarly, when we reflect on what God has done for us—sending His Son, providing for our needs, healing us—we can't help but respond with praise.

However, it's easy to forget God's blessings in the busyness of life. That's why cultivating the fruit of praise involves intentional remembrance. Just as we would water a plant to help it grow, we "water" our praise by recalling God's goodness and faithfulness.

**Application:** Keep a gratitude journal, where you write down specific ways God has blessed you. When you're tempted to complain or feel discouraged, revisit the journal and praise God for the blessings He's given. This habit will keep your heart filled with thanksgiving, even in difficult seasons.



### 3. Praise as an Act of Faith

Praise isn't just for the past—it's also for the present and future. Sometimes, praise is a bold declaration of faith. It's choosing to praise God for His promises, even when you haven't seen them fulfilled yet. Hebrews 13:15 (NIV) instructs us to "continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise."

Think of a farmer planting seeds in the ground. When the seeds are sown, there's no immediate harvest. Yet, the farmer believes that, in time, the seeds will grow into a bountiful crop. In the same way, when we praise God in advance, we're sowing seeds of faith. We're declaring, "God, I trust You to bring a harvest in Your time."

Abraham exemplifies this type of praise. Romans 4:20 (NIV) says, "Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God." Abraham praised God even before Isaac was born—his praise was rooted in God's promise, not his present reality.

**Application:** Begin praising God for what He's going to do, even before you see it happen. If you're waiting for an answer to prayer, praise God for His provision and His timing. This act of faith will not only strengthen your spirit but also invite God to move in your situation.

### 4. Praise as Spiritual Warfare

Praise is a powerful weapon in spiritual battle. When we praise, we're declaring that God is greater than our enemy. In 2 Chronicles 20, King Jehoshaphat faced an overwhelming army. But instead of sending out his soldiers first, he sent out the worshipers! As they praised, God set ambushes against their enemies, and the battle was won without a fight (2 Chronicles 20:22).

In our own lives, praise disarms the enemy's tactics. When we choose to praise in the face of fear, anxiety, or doubt, we're taking our stand in faith and declaring that God is in control. Praise shifts

the atmosphere, pushing back darkness and ushering in the light of God's presence.

**Application:** When you feel overwhelmed by fear, doubt, or anxiety, use praise as your weapon. Turn on worship music, sing praises out loud, or speak Scripture that declares God's power and victory. Watch as the heaviness lifts and God's peace fills your heart.

## **5. Praise as a Lifestyle**

Finally, the fruit of praise is not just something we cultivate on Sundays. It's meant to be a lifestyle. Psalm 34:1 (NIV) says, "I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips." Praise isn't confined to church services or prayer meetings; it's meant to permeate every part of our lives.

Imagine living in a house filled with the sweet aroma of freshly baked bread. The smell doesn't stay in the kitchen; it spreads throughout every room. Likewise, the aroma of praise should fill every aspect of our lives. Whether we're at work, with family, or alone, praise should be a natural overflow of our hearts.

**Application:** Ask yourself, "Is praise a daily part of my life, or is it reserved for specific moments?" Look for opportunities to praise God throughout your day—in your conversations, decisions, and reactions. As you do, you'll find that praise becomes second nature, a continual outpouring of love and adoration for God.

### **Cultivating the Fruit of Praise**

Like cultivating a garden, nurturing the fruit of praise requires intentional effort and attention. It begins with a mindset shift—from focusing on circumstances to fixing our gaze on God. When faced with challenges, a Christian cultivates praise by choosing to trust in God's sovereignty and goodness, even when the notes of life seem discordant.

Scripture offers vivid illustrations of praise as a lifestyle. Consider Paul and Silas in the depths of a Philippian jail, their voices raised in worship despite their chains (Acts 16:25). Their praise not only broke physical

chains but also released supernatural power that shook the foundations of their captivity.

## **Analogies and Illustrations**

Imagine praise as a light in the darkness—a beacon that guides and comforts amid life's storms. Just as a lighthouse stands firm against crashing waves, so does praise anchor our souls in the steadfast love of God. It's the joyful response of a heart liberated from fear and doubt, radiating hope and peace to a watching world.

## **Summary**

The fruit of praise is a powerful, life-giving expression of worship, gratitude, faith, and spiritual victory. Like any fruit, it takes time, effort, and intentionality to cultivate. But as we develop this fruit, we'll find that our hearts are more attuned to God, our faith is strengthened, and our lives are transformed.

The fruit of praise transcends mere words or actions—it's a melody that echoes through eternity, resonating with the heart of God. As Christians, cultivating this fruit involves daily choices to rejoice, give thanks, and worship in all circumstances. By doing so, we align our lives with God's purposes and experience the transformative power of praise.

So, let's choose to praise. Let's spotlight God's greatness, thank Him for His blessings, declare His promises, and use praise as our weapon. In doing so, we'll experience the fullness of His presence and power in every area of our lives.

# The Fruits of Righteousness

Righteousness is another type of fruit that believers should be producing. Philippians 1:11 speaks of being “*filled with the **fruits** of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*” When we live righteously, we reflect the character of Christ and bring honor to God.

James 3:18 adds, “*Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*” As we pursue righteousness and strive to live in peace with others, we sow seeds that produce a harvest of righteousness in our lives and the lives of those around us.

## What Is the Fruit of Righteousness?

The *fruit of righteousness* refers to the outward expression of an inward transformation—a life that reflects the holiness and moral integrity of Christ. It's not something we manufacture on our own but something that grows naturally when we are connected to Jesus.

- Philippians 1:11: “*Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*”
- Hebrews 12:11: “*No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*”

In these verses, we see that the *fruit of righteousness* is the result of God's work in us. It's the visible evidence of a life aligned with God's will—just like apples on a tree prove that it's healthy and rooted in good soil.

## The Root of Righteousness: Connection to Christ

The first thing to understand is that this fruit doesn't come from our efforts; it comes from being rooted in Christ. Just as a tree must be connected to its roots to draw nourishment, we must remain connected to Jesus to grow in righteousness.

Jesus Himself said, *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5). Our righteousness comes from Jesus—it’s His righteousness being reflected in us. Imagine trying to grow fruit on a branch that’s not connected to the tree. That’s impossible, right? The same goes for the Christian life. We cannot bear the fruit of righteousness without staying deeply connected to Christ.

## **How to Develop the Fruit of Righteousness**

Like any fruit, righteousness must be developed and cultivated. It’s not automatic. We have to be intentional about nurturing it in our lives. Here are some practical ways to cultivate righteousness:

### **1. Walk in Faith**

Righteousness begins with faith. The Bible tells us that Abraham was counted as righteous because of his faith (Romans 4:3). Similarly, our righteousness before God is not something we earn but something we receive through faith in Christ. Faith is like the seed that grows into the fruit of righteousness.

### **Illustration:**

Imagine planting a seed in your garden. You can't see the fruit yet, but you trust that with water and sunlight, that seed will grow into a plant. Faith is like planting that seed—it’s the first step toward the fruit of righteousness, even before you see the evidence.

### **2. Embrace God's Discipline**

The writer of Hebrews speaks of righteousness as something that comes through discipline (Hebrews 12:11). This discipline isn't always easy, but it's necessary for our growth. Just like pruning a tree helps it produce more fruit, God’s correction and discipline refine us, allowing us to bear more righteousness.

### **Analogy:**

Think about a sculptor chiseling away at a block of marble. Each strike of the hammer and chisel may seem harsh, but with every stroke, the sculpture takes shape. God's discipline works the same way in our lives—shaping us to reflect His righteousness.

### **3. Practice Godly Living**

Righteousness is not just about faith; it's about living out that faith through our actions. James 2:26 tells us that faith without works is dead. If we want to see the fruit of righteousness in our lives, we need to practice godly living—choosing what is right, resisting sin, and following Christ's example.

- James 3:18: *“Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.”*
- 1 Timothy 6:11: *“But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.”*

### **4. Abide in God's Word**

The Bible is the primary way we learn what it means to live a righteous life. When we spend time in God's Word, it's like watering the soil of our hearts, helping the seeds of righteousness grow. Psalm 1:2-3 says, *“Blessed is the one...whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his Law Day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season.”*

### **5. Pray for the Holy Spirit's Guidance**

We can't grow the fruit of righteousness on our own. We need the Holy Spirit to guide us, convict us, and empower us. Galatians 5:16 tells us to *“walk by the Spirit”* so that we will not gratify the desires of the flesh. The Holy Spirit is like a gardener who tends to the soil of our hearts, ensuring that righteousness can flourish.

**Analogy:**

Think of the Holy Spirit as a skilled gardener. A gardener knows exactly how much water, sunlight, and nutrients a plant needs to thrive. In the same way, the Holy Spirit knows exactly what we need to grow in righteousness, and He provides the help we need every step of the way.

**6. Surround Yourself with Godly Community**

We grow best when we grow together. Proverbs 27:17 says, “*As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.*” Being in a community of believers helps us stay accountable, encourages us when we struggle, and provides us with examples of righteous living.

**Summary**

The fruit of righteousness is a beautiful thing. It grows out of a life rooted in Christ, nurtured by faith, disciplined by God’s loving correction, and cultivated through intentional living. It’s not something that happens overnight, but like all good fruit, it’s worth the wait

When we are faithful in cultivating the fruit of righteousness, God promises a bountiful harvest. James 3:18 speaks of the “*harvest of righteousness*” that comes from a life lived in peace and obedience to God. This harvest isn’t just for our benefit—it impacts those around us. A tree doesn’t bear fruit for itself; it bears fruit for others. In the same way, the righteousness in our lives becomes a blessing to our families, friends, and communities.

So, how’s your garden growing? Are you connected to Christ, allowing His righteousness to shape your life? As you trust Him, cultivate your faith, and live in obedience, you’ll see the fruit of righteousness begin to flourish—and others will be blessed by the harvest.

# **CLOSING THE GRAND FINALE**



Here we are, at the finish line. You've made it through nine chapters of exploring each fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. It's been quite a journey, hasn't it? Like planting a garden, cultivating these fruits takes time, attention, and a whole lot of effort. But when they grow, oh boy, do they transform your life!

Let's take a quick walk back through the garden we've been cultivating together and reflect on these fruits. Don't just think of them as a checklist to see how you measure up (though it's tempting), but rather as seeds. Seeds that, when sown, nurtured, and given time, bloom into character traits that not only change you but those around you.

**Love** – We kicked off with love, the heartbeat of all the fruits. Without it, nothing else grows. Love is the soil. It's what gets your hands dirty in the best possible way. Remember, love isn't just a feeling, it's an action—an intentional decision to put someone else before yourself. It's easy to forget in our fast-paced world, but when you lead with love, everything else has a way of falling into place.

**Joy** – Who could forget joy? It's that inner contentment that says, "Things may not be perfect, but I've got something unshakeable in my heart." It's not dependent on circumstances, but rooted in knowing God is in control. If love is the soil, joy is the sunshine. Let's face it, nobody wants to live in a world without joy, it's the difference between surviving and thriving.

**Peace** – Ah, peace. The calm in the chaos. The "it's going to be okay" when everything around you says it's not. Peace is that deep-rooted confidence that comes from trusting God with the unknown. We learned that peace isn't the absence of problems but the presence of God in the middle of them. It's that quiet confidence that lets us sleep well at night.

**Patience** – This one might’ve been the most challenging for some of us, right? Patience is like the slow cooker of the spiritual life—it takes time, but it’s worth the wait. It’s the strength to endure difficult situations and people (yes, people!) without losing your cool. Whether you’re in traffic, dealing with delays, or simply waiting on a promise, patience is the slow, steady path to maturity.

**Kindness** – Kindness, as we discovered, is more than just being “nice.” It’s a powerful force of action. It’s love with work boots on. In a world where harshness can feel like the default setting, kindness can be the most radical and disarming response. It’s compassion in action, and it doesn’t just make a difference, it *is* the difference.

**Goodness** – The word “good” doesn’t seem flashy, but wow, is it powerful. Goodness is integrity. It’s doing the right thing, even when no one’s looking, and even when it costs you something. We learned that goodness is about having a heart for what’s right, not just for the praise or recognition, but because it’s who you are deep down.

**Faithfulness** – Ah, faithfulness. In a world where loyalty is rare, being consistent, dependable, and trustworthy stands out like a lighthouse in a storm. Faithfulness isn’t just about big promises, it’s about the little moments of staying true, day after day. It’s about being someone others can count on because you’ve rooted your life in God’s unchanging character.

**Gentleness** – Gentleness isn’t weakness, as we often think. Its strength under control. It’s the soft answer that turns away wrath. It’s the ability to respond with grace rather than harshness, even when you feel justified in doing so. Gentleness is what tempers our power and makes us approachable. It’s a fruit that invites others into relationship instead of pushing them away.

**Self-Control** – And last, but certainly not least, is self-control. Let's be honest, this is probably one we all wish came a little more naturally. But here's the thing: self-control is the guardrail that keeps all the other fruits in place. It's the ability to say "no" when you need to, and "yes" when it counts. It's about not being ruled by your impulses but letting God's Spirit lead the way.

### **So, What Now?**

Here's the deal: you're not going to wake up tomorrow with a fully blossomed garden of spiritual fruit. Cultivating the fruit of the Spirit is a process, and it takes time. Think of it as a lifelong adventure—some days will feel like you've nailed it, while other days, you'll wonder if you're back to square one. And that's okay! The key is to keep at it.

The truth is you can't force these fruits to grow on your own. You need the Master Gardener's help. The more you walk in step with the Spirit, the more these fruits will naturally bloom in your life. Remember what we said at the beginning—these aren't just character traits; they are reflections of Christ Himself. You're not just becoming a better version of you; you're becoming more like *Him*.

So, as you go forward, embrace the process. Don't strive to be perfect—just strive to be faithful. Let love lead, let joy overflow, let peace guard your heart, and let patience have its perfect work. Be kind, do good, stay faithful, be gentle, and hold on to self-control. It's a lifelong journey, but one well worth taking.

And just like that, the fruit of the Spirit will grow in your life—slowly, steadily, and beautifully. Trust me, when the world sees this kind of garden in full bloom, they won't be able to look away.

And that, my friend, is how you make the world a little bit more like heaven. **The End...or Really, Just the Beginning.**

## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## Philippians 2:13

# Prayer of Salvation

The only way you can have the fruits of the spirit and begin to cultivate and develop them in your life is to be a child of God. The only way to become a child of God is to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Jesus called it being “born again”. (John 3:3) We often hear people refer to as being “saved”. The apostle Paul called it a “free gift”. (Romans 6:23).

If you have never personally received Jesus as your Lord and Savior or you are not sure now is a great time. There is nothing you can do to deserve or earn it. (Ephesians 2:8) However, it is a gift that you must receive. If you are ready to receive the gift of eternal life and become a child of God pray the following prayer and believe it in your heart. (Romans 10:9) By His grace, God has already done everything to provide salvation. Your part is simply to believe and receive.

Pray this out loud,

***Jesus, I confess that You are my Lord and Savior. I believe in my heart that God raised You from the dead. By faith in Your Word, I receive salvation now. Thank You for saving me!***

The very moment you commit your life to Jesus Christ, the truth of His Word instantly comes to pass in your spirit. If you prayed that prayer and meant it from your heart, you are now saved, a child of God, a brand-new you! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

## About the Author

Bruce Edwards is a pastor, teacher, and author with over 40 years of leadership experience in business and ministry. He has been married to his wife Trudy for over 50 years. They have two children and 6 grandchildren.

He has a master's degree in business management and a degree in pastoral ministry. He served over 28 years at Victory Christian Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma as Senior Associate Pastor. He has written over 30 books and helps pastors grow their churches.

As a pastor, he has a passion for helping people experience the abundant life provided through Jesus and is committed to teaching and communicating the principles of God's Word with clarity, simplicity, and boldness.





# Nine Fruits <sup>of</sup> the Spirit

*Cultivating a life that reflects Christ*

*In a world full of anger, anxiety, and adversity, how can you live an abundant, joy-filled life? The answer lies in cultivating the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life. They provide the keys to spiritual growth and fulfillment.*



*When you yield control to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to shape your character with these powerful and dynamic virtues in your life you will be able to live an abundant life equipping you to overcome life's challenges and bless others. In this book, you will learn what the nine fruits of the spirit are and how to cultivate them in your life*

**Bruce R. Edwards**