

MINI STUDY How You Can Bear the Fruit of the Spirit "

The Good News, in conjunction with the Correspondence Course Department, presents brief monthly excursions into the study of the Bible, delving into topics relevant to the development and increased understanding of future members of the God Family. Bible study is one means by which Christians are renewed daily (II Cor. 4:16), so let's refresh ourselves with more of the precious truths of God's Word!

Instructions: The format of these ministudies is similar to that of the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. Look up and read in your Bible the scripture references given in answer to the questions. Comments following the questions elaborate on the scriptures just read. That's all there is to it! (These studies are based on the King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise stated.)

The Bible clearly tells us that the presence of God's Spirit in one's mind, or the lack thereof, is the sole factor that determines whether or not an individual is really a Christian (Rom. 8:9). Therefore, it is imperative that we understand just how the Holy Spirit is manifested in a Christian's life.

1. Did Jesus Christ clearly indicate that a person is known by his "fruits," or works? Matt. 7:20. In what way did He characterize Himself, His Father and their followers? John 15:1-8. Does God expect Christians to bear only a little fruit? Verses 5, 8.

This is the reason Christ calls and chooses His disciples - to bear fruit! "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). Jesus was talking about spiritual fruit!

Jesus was not talking about a momentary sensual thrill or experience, coupled with a testimony that proves you are one of His. You must be led by the Holy Spirit to be Christ's (Rom. 8:14) and bear spiritual fruit.

But what will God's Spirit lead and guide you to do? What spiritual fruit, or results, does the Holy Spirit produce in one who is striving to do the will of God?

Fruit is classified as the edible, usable portion of a plant or vine. Christ is the "vine," and we - if we are His Spirit-begotten children - are the "branches." Our fruit is what we produce as Christians that is usable to Jesus Christ.

Now the good we produce comes from the vine - from Christ. Let's understand. A vine produces grapes, not thorns- An apple tree produces apples, not thistles. The vine determines what fruit should be borne. By this simple analogy we see that it is Christ who determines what kind of fruit we should bear as Christians. That fruit is a result of having the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5) at work in us as made possible by the Spirit of God.

2. How did the apostle Paul, who was inspired of Christ, outline the fruit that the Holy Spirit produces in a Christian? Gal. 5:22-23.

The Holy Spirit imparts to you the traits of God's character. If we lack these characteristics in our lives, then we are likely to be producing many of the opposite fruits called the "works of the flesh." These undesirable works are mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21. They include strife, division and various objectionable states of mind. All the works

of the flesh contribute to the general misery and unhappiness of the individual, being thoroughly unsatisfying and unfulfilling.

3. What is the first fruit Paul lists? Gal. 5:22. Also notice Romans 5:5. Is love the basic characteristic of God's nature? I John 4:16. Is it the greatest attribute God transmits to us by the Holy Spirit? I Cor. 13:13. Be sure to read all of chapter 13. (Charity in the King James Version is an old English word for love.)

The first and most important fruit of God's Spirit dwelling in the minds and hearts of converted human beings is love. It is not just another form of human love, but the divine love that comes directly from God!

4. Is this the same love that will enable us to fulfill - to obey - God's law? Rom. 13:10.

The love of God is imparted to human beings by the Holy Spirit. Metaphorically speaking, God's Spirit runs down the riverbed of His law - the Ten Commandments. It is expressed first of all in adoration and worship of God and literal obedience to Him; and then in outgoing concern, compassion, kindness and service toward our fellowman (see Matt. 22:37-40).

The original Greek word translated love in Galatians 5:22 is agape. In context it means devotedness or kindly concern - an intense desire to serve God and man. John said: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (I John 5:2-3).

5. What is one of the principle ways in which God's love manifests itself toward one's neighbor? Turn to Romans 13:10 once again.

Did you notice that? The kind of love imparted by God's Spirit works no ill to anybody! Rather, God's love is just the opposite - a deep concern and an intense desire to serve, help and encourage others.

When you receive the Holy Spirit, the love of God is the first fruit you should begin to show. You should think or work no ill toward anyone, but rather learn, develop, think on and act on a profound concern and a fervent desire to serve God and man.

At first that's a tall order! But over a period of time - not all at once - you will begin to notice this wonderful fruit in your life as you exercise and use God's Holy Spirit.

The other fruits of the Spirit, mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23, and which we will now begin to cover, amplify this basic characteristic of God's nature - the divine love given to those whom God begets with His Holy Spirit.

6. What is the second fruit that Paul lists in Galatians 5:22? Is it God's will that we be literally filled with joy? Rom. 15:13.

Some people think of joy as the end result of some kind of self-gratification - a new toy, new car, new home, new baby. Physically speaking, when things go your way, the emotion you feel is joy.

7. Does the Bible give rich, deep meaning to this vital fruit of God's Spirit? Luke 15:7, 10.

What causes the angels to have joy? Is it something personal they receive? Is it adding to or gratifying the self in some way? It is none of these. Their joy is in seeing others receive something good for them - in this case as a result of peoples' repentance, which

eventually leads to eternal Sonship in God's Kingdom. The angels delight in seeing human beings begin to learn the

way of life that will result in the good, lasting, permanent blessings of God's Kingdom.

S. What kind of joy does Jesus Christ experience? Heb. 12:2.

Christ was willing to suffer in anticipation of the real joy He would experience afterward in seeing fellow heirs born into God's Kingdom. This was made possible only through the sacrifice of His life.

Joy received from personal gratification is only temporary. The car wears out, the ball game is over, the baby grows up, the stomach empties. None of these physical things - though perfectly all right to enjoy for the time - can ever bring permanent, lasting joy. Christ and the righteous angels receive joy from the outgoing giving of themselves to God and others! This kind of joy lasts for all eternity and does not require constant bolstering and rejuvenating with more and more objects and things

9. What is the third fruit that God's Spirit will manifest in a Christian's life? Gal. 5:22.

Peace of mind is what everyone would like to have, but what so few really possess. Many vainly attempt to achieve peace of mind through escape into alcohol, other drugs, bizarre activities, etc. A person who truly has peace of mind has greater control over his emotions - even in trying circumstances. He enjoys greater tranquility and calm, quiet serenity, together with orderliness of mind.

10. Does peace of mind come from keeping the Ten Commandments? Ps. 119:165.

No one who consistently breaks God's law can have real peace of mind. He will have fears and frustrations, as well as a guilty conscience_ Notice how David's words apply.

Does a thief have peace of mind when he sees a police car driving by? Is he calm and serene? If he is a good actor, he may appear to be outwardly, but inside he is a seething caldron, hotly activated by his adrenal glands. Always he has to be prepared to run and escape or cover up in some way. This man can never find real peace unless and until he repents of - quits - breaking God's Ten Commandments, especially the Eighth!

The person who keeps God's law knows he is doing the right thing. His goals and purposes are stabilized. His life isn't fraught with frustrations, and he is not plagued by a guilty conscience. He is at peace with God, with himself and with his neighbor. He has "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7). (This subject to be continued next issue.) - Prepared by Richard H. Sedliacik

Part two

Each one had a particular Work to do - and he or she did it!

After pondering these remarkable examples of faith, one can better understand why Herbert W. Armstrong says so much about the Work of God that must be done today. He has been given a special commission by God that he has been - and now is - faithful to carry out. And it is being done by the very faith of Christ!

The original Greek word for faith is pistis - which means firm conviction, assurance, fidelity. Fidelity is another way of describing one who is careful to preserve that which has been committed to his trust. Years of experience have shown that those who are

increasing in the fruit of God's Spirit are the ones who remain faithful to God's charge - who have their whole hearts in the very Work of God - those who, in whatever way they are able, have an active part in helping to fulfill Christ's commission to His Church.

16. Will meekness also be one of the traits of a Spirit-led individual? Gal. 5:23. Who set an outstanding example in this regard? Num. 12:3.

Many falsely assume that meekness is always synonymous with weakness. Moses became so dedicated to God and filled with the Holy Spirit, he was considered to be the meekest man on earth. No longer did he seek to exalt himself, but became lowly and humble in attitude.

When God was about to disinherit and destroy the children of Israel because of their many rebellions, Moses - in spite of many false personal accusations against him - entreated God to save them (Num. 14), and in meekness he instructed those who "oppose[d] themselves" (a required trait of a servant of God - see II Tim. 2:24-25). A meek person is not revengeful.

17. What is the last, and one of the least understood fruits of the Holy Spirit mentioned by Paul? Gal. 5:23.

The world has often misunderstood the meaning of the word temperance. Temperance does not mean abstinence! Temperance means self-control, continence, self-government, moderation - particularly in reference to sensual appetites. The proverbs of Solomon are replete with exhortations about temperance - a vital attribute of God's Spirit.

18. When one receives the Holy Spirit, will these precious fruits suddenly appear overnight - almost all at once? II Pet. 3:18; Matt. 5:48. (Recall from previous studies that the sense of Matthew 5:48 is "Become perfect" - a gradual process.)

Fruit does not appear overnight on a tree. It takes time, water, the nutrients of the soil and sunlight to grow. Likewise, it takes time to grow spiritually and manifest the "fruit of the Spirit"!

Spirit must be used and renewed

One is spiritually minded to the degree that he has and uses God's Spirit in his life. You must draw on and use the Holy Spirit every day to produce the "fruit of the Spirit." Notice:

19. Even though the members of the Church of God in Corinth were begotten by the Holy Spirit from the Father. (1 Cor. 3:16), were many of them not showing the fruit of God's Spirit? Verses 1-3.

There was strife and arguing, debating, contentions and divisions among the Corinthian brethren. These are some of the "works of the flesh" mentioned in Gal. 5:19-21! Notice why they were manifesting these unspiritual characteristics.

20. Must the Holy Spirit clearly be put to use? II Tim. 1:6-7.

Even though the members of God's Church at Corinth had the Spirit as a begetting, they seemed to have lost sight of the fact that God's Spirit must also be used and drawn upon to produce its fruit. They were producing fleshly works - "doing what comes naturally" - simply because they were not "stirring up" the Spirit of Christ and drawing on it to produce the results of the mind of Christ! (Phil. 2:5; 1:11.)

Another probable and perhaps obvious reason some in that church were acting carnal was because they also lacked a supply of the Spirit of Christ in the first place. Notice:

21- Does one receive all at once enough of the Spirit of Christ to last as long as he or she lives, or must the supply be replenished every day? Phil. 1:19; II Cor. 4:16. Also notice Jesus' profound analogy in John 7:37-39.

The Spirit of Christ is active - dynamic! It is a moving force that can't be bottled up within you. Jesus compared it to "living water" that comes into you, and then flows out from you. It circulates like electricity in a complete circuit - from God, into you, and then out from you manifesting the "fruit of the Spirit," and then back to God.

Since the Spirit must flow into and out from us, then obviously it must be continually supplied. Therefore, the supply of the Holy Spirit must be renewed in us daily through contact with God in believing prayer (Luke 11:13).

To put it in the vernacular, our spiritual battery must be continually charged up. We must daily plug into the power source. That source of the Holy Spirit is GOD! Once plugged in, and as we use the Holy Spirit, we can indeed bear the "fruit of the Spirit." - Prepared by Richard H. Sedhacik.