

What Is Fruit of the Holy Spirit?

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You may have heard about Fruit of the Holy Spirit and wondered what it is and how it relates to believing in Christ. These are questions often overlooked because many believe that Jesus' only God-given purpose was to forgive humanity its sins by dying on the cross on our behalf, so by believing in Him and His resurrection, we would have eternal life in His kingdom. All true. And eternal life is, obviously, a very, very big thing. But it is not the only big thing we are promised when we believe in Jesus Christ.

Focusing only on God's gift of eternal life leaves out something vital about Jesus Christ. God also commanded Jesus to teach us how we should live once we are His children; and God sent the Holy Spirit to help us learn and practice Jesus' teachings. What is our reward if we follow Jesus' teachings, i.e., repent, have faith, trust, and abide in Him, keep His commandments, and seek His righteousness? Fruit of the Holy Spirit will be our reward – and not only in heaven but also during our remaining life here on earth. As you will see, this is also a very, very big thing.

In Galatians 5:22 – 23, Paul tells us what Fruit of the Holy Spirit is: ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”*** These rewards are the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who follow Christ.

The Greek word καρπός, that we translate as “fruit”, usually means fruit in the sense of edible fruits and vegetables; but it can also be translated as offspring, deed, action, result, or profit. In an agrarian society, fruit is a good thing; it is the result of hard work and careful tending. Today we might use the word “fruit” in a phrase such as the “fruit of our labor”, to communicate the results of our effort. Even if we don't harvest strawberries or apples, we can have “fruit” - something to show for our work - in a paycheck, a finished project, or even a baby. Understanding that “fruit” in this verse from Galatians can mean “deed, action, or result”, helps make this verse more personal because the fruit we will have in our lives depends on our choice whether to believe in Jesus Christ or not.

The following verses not only describe Jesus' desire for His disciples (and us) to go out into the world and share His teachings, but they also exemplify how we are blessed with Fruit of the Holy Spirit when we do:

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch [follower] in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.” John 15:1-11

When we believe in Jesus Christ and accept Him as our sole Lord and Savior, we can enjoy a life filled with Fruit of the Holy Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control – as opposed to living a life filled with such things as sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. How do we know this? The Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 4:4-9:

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”

Fruit of the Holy Spirit Explained

Most of the following information on Fruit of the Holy Spirit Explained was taken directly from Penny Noyes' article "Fruit of the Holy Spirit", which can be found on Christianity.com. Penny Noyes, M.Ed. is the author of *Embracing Change - Learning to Trust God from the Women of the Bible* and two books about Hezekiah. You can follow Penny on her [blog](#) and on Instagram [@pennynoyes](#). Our additions are italicized.

1. Love

In Galatians 5:22-23, the word *love* is translated from the Greek word ἀγάπη (agape). The Greek language has multiple words for love including eros, which is sexual love, and philos, which is brotherly love. Agape is perfect love that only God can give.

"In respect of agape as used of God, it expresses the deep and constant 'love' and interest of a perfect Being towards entirely unworthy objects, producing and fostering a reverential 'love' in them towards the Giver, and a practical 'love' towards those who are partakers of the same, and a desire to help others to seek the Giver," according to Vine's Expository Dictionary. *In addition, Jesus' agape' love could be defined as a tangible, self-sacrificing giving of Himself to meet our needs. We see this clearly expressed in the following three Scripture verses:*

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." John 15:1

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 has a great definition of agape love: ***"Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."***

Love for God and others is the result of receiving God's perfect agape' love. Jesus encourages His followers:

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." John 15:9-11.

2. Joy

Joy - χαρά (Chara) - is often translated as joy or delight. It is often associated in the Bible with gladness. It is the realization [and experience] of God's favor and grace in one's life. Biblical joy is happiness that is not dependent on our circumstances. Paul encourages us to:

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance." James 1:1-2

3. Peace

The Biblical concept of peace - εἰρήνη (eirene) - is inclusive of life without conflict, as well as wholeness and harmony with God and others. A life of peace is safe and secure both physically and mentally.

"The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace." Romans 8:6

Peace is a result of allowing the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts and minds. When we have peace, we are free from fear and worry about such things as our finances, our safety, our salvation, and our eternal life. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is seen in the peace that comes even when our circumstances are far from tranquil. Jesus encourages His followers in John 16:33:

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

4. Forbearance

Forbearance - μακροθυμία (makrothumia) - is not a word that most of us commonly use. The Greek word in Galatians 5:22-23 is often translated using other words such as patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance, longsuffering, and slowness in avenging wrongs. The Holy Spirit empowers believers to withstand challenging situations with perseverance and endurance.

The Greek root of this word relates to two words that mean "long" and "passion". Through the Holy Spirit we are able to wait longer before indulging our passions - we become "long-tempered" rather than "short-tempered." Paul uses this word when he describes Jesus' patience (μακροθυμία) with him. As 1 Timothy 1:16 tells us:

“But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.”

Like Paul, we have all benefited from Christ’s immense patience with us. The evidence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is also seen in our ability to persevere, be patient, steadfast and long-tempered. Ephesians 4:1-2 encourages us to: *“be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”*

5. Kindness

Kindness - χρηστότης (chréstotés) - conveys the meaning of moral goodness, integrity, usefulness, and benignity. In the King James Version this word is translated “gentleness”, which links it to the meaning of a gentleman or a gentlewoman; someone who behaves properly, with moral integrity and kindness.

Romans 2:4 reminds us that it is God’s kindness that leads us to repentance, not judgement. The Holy Spirit enables us to have moral integrity with kindness and not get trapped in self-righteousness judgement.

“Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”

6. Goodness

Goodness - ἀγαθωσύνη (agathosune) - means uprightness of heart and life; kindness. Goodness is seen in our actions. This word relates to not only *being* good, but also *doing* good. The Contemporary English Version of 2 Thessalonians 1:11 highlights this meaning:

“We pray for God’s power to help you do all the good things you hope to do and your faith makes you want to do.”

Through the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives, we are upright in heart, and we do good things – not because we have to or need to, but because we are moved to do so by the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

7. Faithfulness

Faithfulness - πίστις (pistis) - is evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives. Faithfulness is a character trait that combines dependability and trust based on our confidence in God and His eternal faithfulness to us. In the New Testament, faith is the belief in God and the conviction that Jesus is the Messiah through whom we obtain eternal salvation. God showed His faithfulness to us in that He gave His only begotten Son to die on the cross to forgive us our sins (John 3:16). Another example of God’s faithfulness to us is expressed in 1 Corinthians 10:13:

“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

8. Gentleness

Gentleness - πραΰτης (prautes) - was translated “meekness” in the King James Version, but because being meek seemed weak, modern translations of the Bible use gentleness to mean mildness of disposition.

Baker’s Evangelical Bible Dictionary explains, “Meekness does not identify the weak but more precisely the strong who have been placed in a position of weakness where they persevere without giving up. The use of the Greek word when applied to animals makes this clear, for it means ‘tame’ when applied to wild animals. In other words, such animals have not lost their strength but have learned to control the destructive instincts that prevent them from living in harmony with others.” Jesus describes Himself as gentle in Matthew 11:29:

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

9. Self-Control

Self-control - ἐγκράτεια (egkrateia) - is the ability to control one’s body and its sensual appetites and desires – physically and mentally – through the power of the Holy Spirit. Self-control relates to both chastity and sobriety, and particularly moderation in eating and drinking. Self-control is the opposite of the works of the flesh that indulge sensual desires. As Galatians 5:16 says:

“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.”

Our self-control is strengthened when we make our thoughts align with how Christ would approach something. As 2 Corinthians 10:5 – 6 tells us:

“... for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, ...”

What is the Meaning of the Spirit and the Purpose of Fruit?

The Spirit is the holy presence of God. To be exact, *the Spirit is God, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, and the person of the Godhead whom Jesus told us would be present with us and within us.*

The Greek word *πνεῦμα* (pneuma) has multiple meanings including breath, spirit, or wind. It is most commonly used to describe the holy presence of God on earth, but New Testament writers also use this word to describe the wind, other spirits including angels and demons, and even the human soul or disposition. *However, when the word pneuma is used in the New Testament in relationship to God, it refers most often to God’s Holy Spirit and His work among us, or presence with and in us.*

In Galatians 5:22, the phrase “fruit of the Spirit” is specifically referring to the Holy Spirit. As believers in Jesus, Christians are given the Holy Spirit to lead us and empower us. As reported in Acts 1:8, Jesus told His Apostles: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Fruits of the Spirit indicate a relationship with Christ.

Ephesians 1:13 – 14 explains that the Holy Spirit is a deposit given to believers in Christ that guarantees their relationship with Christ.

“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.”

In Galatians 5, the Apostle Paul wants to make sure that people know how to spot the evidence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The result of the Holy Spirit operating in our lives will be good things like love, joy, peace, kindness, and self-control. He also wants to make sure that we know evil actions like sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies are not the work of the Holy Spirit because they are the exact opposite of what Christ stands for and teaches us.

As we explain in the next PDF document, “What Is Required to Have Fruit of the Holy Spirit?”, benefiting from Fruit of the Holy Spirit by being “sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit” comes not just from believing in Jesus Christ, but also by living our lives as He wants us to. Living such a life requires four things:

- 1. Following Christ’s teachings,*
- 2. Keeping His commandments,*
- 3. Mirroring His righteousness in all our behaviors, and*
- 4. Trusting in the Holy Spirit’s power to produce Fruit of the Spirit within us.*