

WHAT IS “FRUIT”?

When my kids were little they loved watching the *Veggie Tales* movies. Their favorite Veggie Tale characters were Bob and Larry – a tomato and cucumber, respectively. If you are also a *Veggie Tales* fan, you might want to sit down because I am about to shake things up. Larry and Bob aren't vegetables! To be botanically correct, tomatoes and cucumbers are fruits! In fact, pumpkins and zucchini are fruit too.

The confusion over fruits and vegetables stems from the differences between scientific classification and how we use them in cooking. We tend to see “fruits” as sweet and “vegetables” as savory. In case you're interested, here's a definition I found at wisegeek.com.

Simply put, a fruit is the ovary of a plant, which means that it may contain seeds, while a vegetable is a plant part, which does not contain seeds.

It really doesn't matter if we consider a tomato to be a fruit or a vegetable. But we do need a good understanding of the “fruit of the Spirit.” Over the next few weeks we will plant God's truth about spiritual fruit in our hearts, cultivate our lives to receive it, and take action to help it grow! Today we'll take a closer look at what the “fruit of the Spirit” *is* and what it *is not*.

Read our focal passage, Galatians 5:16-26.

The word “fruit” used in Galatians 5:22 is the Greek word “karpos.” According to *Mounces Complete Expository Dictionary*, “karpos” refers to the natural product of something that is alive. Literally, it's used of the product of trees, vines, and crops. But it's also used metaphorically to refer to the natural product of a spiritual being. Paul uses it to contrast what our sinful natures naturally produces with what the Holy Spirit naturally produces.

Plant: Prerequisite to Growing Spiritual Fruit

The obvious prerequisite to producing the “fruit of the Spirit” is the presence of the Spirit. Let's see what the Bible says about the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and His work in us.

Read Romans 8:9-11. Mark the following statements as True or False:

- You can be a Christian without having the Holy Spirit.*
- If you do not have the Spirit you do not belong to Christ.*
- If you belong to Christ then you have His Spirit.*

Read Ephesians 1:13-14. Check all the statements that apply.

- We receive the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ.*
- The Holy Spirit “marks” us as belonging to God.*
- The Spirit is our “guarantee” that we will receive all God's promises.*

When we place our faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, God guarantees our salvation by placing His Spirit within us. Every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. (*If you don't have a saving relationship with Jesus or aren't sure, read "How to Have a Relationship with Jesus."*)

Cultivate: Two Key Facts about the Fruit of the Spirit

Let's get a better understanding of the Fruit of the Spirit by exploring two key facts.

Fact #1: "Fruit" is the natural by-product of the Spirit in a Christian's life.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 from the New Living Translation below:

⁷ For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

The Spirit has work to do in the life of a believer. According to 2 Corinthians 3:18, what is the work of the Spirit in our lives?

From the moment of salvation until the end of our lives on this earth, the Spirit of God works in believers to transform our nature and character into that of Christ's. God's goal for all His children is for us to be like Jesus (Romans 8:29). Therefore, the Holy Spirit is constantly working to rid our lives of the "acts of the sinful nature" (Gal 5:19) and conform us into the image of Christ. "Fruit of the Spirit" is evidence that our character is becoming like Christ's.

Fact #2: "Fruit of the Spirit" is not the same as "spiritual gifts."

We've learned that "fruit of the Spirit" is the development of Christ's character in the life of a believer. Now let's take a look at what this "fruit" is *not*.

Read 1 Cor 12:4-11. List the differences between "spiritual gifts" and "spiritual fruit."

Although the Spirit is the source of both, His "gifts" and "fruit" are not the same. There are a multitude of different kinds of gifts but an individual only receives what the Holy Spirit determines to give. However the "fruit" of the Spirit should be common to all Christians. The word "karpos" is singular signifying that "fruit" is a unified whole. As we grow in Christ-likeness we will produce *all* the characteristics of His nature.

Grow: A Challenge to Know the Fruit

I want my life to increasingly produce the "Fruit of the Spirit." How about you? As a solid reminder of what our lives should look like, will you join me in memorizing Galatians 5:22-23? Let's do it?

Let's talk. Will you take the Scripture memory challenge? How has today's lesson helped you understand the "Fruit of the Spirit?" What stood out to you the most in what we discussed?