

Beautiful, Bountiful Harvest

When we began this study, I mentioned my lemon tree. How it budded and bloomed. How the little lemons began to grow. Six weeks later the lemons aren't ready to harvest. The fruit is still growing; the lemons still green. Fruit production takes time. But I *will* drink lemonade!

Like physical fruit needs time to grow, the fruit of the Spirit will not ripen in our lives overnight. We must work consistently to crucify the old nature. We must continually refuse to give in to our fleshly desires and yield our will to the Spirit's. We *can* say "no" to our sinful nature, accept the "way out" God provides, and follow the Holy Spirit's leading.

As we grow, the characteristics of Christ – fruit of the Spirit – will be manifested in our lives. As the Spirit transforms us more and more into the image of Christ, we will produce a beautiful, bountiful fruit harvest!

Plant: Knowing the Fruit

In Week Two, we discussed the meaning of "fruit." The Greek word "karpos" refers to the natural product of the Holy Spirit, who lives inside every believer. The word is singular, signifying that "fruit" is a unified whole. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* suggests we think of the fruit as a "bunch of grapes instead of separate pieces of fruit." As we grow in Christ-likeness we will produce *all* the characteristics of His nature.

If you memorized Galatians 5:22-23, then you know the 9 characteristics of the Spirit's fruit. List them below. If you didn't memorize the passage, read it now, then list them.

Let's consider the meaning of each characteristic. Place the letter of a definition in the blank before the correct characteristic. (To double-check, the answer key is at the end of the lesson!)

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| ___ 1. Love | a. Putting up with circumstances and other people, even when severely tried; endurance, longsuffering, and perseverance |
| ___ 2. Joy | b. Related closely to "kindness"; generosity that springs from kindness; could include "sterner" acts of doing good |
| ___ 3. Peace | c. The attitude that deliberately expresses itself in loving ways and seeks the welfare of others; it's dependent on the giver's character, not emotion |
| ___ 4. Patience | d. Reliability or trustworthiness; also describes someone willing to die for their confession of Christ |
| ___ 5. Kindness | e. Strength to control our sinful desires, to say "no" to the flesh |
| ___ 6. Goodness | f. Corresponds to "happiness" in the secular world but does not depend on our physical circumstances |

- ___ 7. Faithfulness g. Acting in a good and gentle way toward another
- ___ 8. Gentleness/Meekness h. State of tranquility; harmonious relations between people and with God; sense of rest and contentment
- ___ 9. Self-Control i. Closely linked to humility; grace of the soul; not weakness; opposite of self-assertive and self-interest

Cultivate: Find out More

Let's take a quick look at an example of each characteristic in action. Read the following Scripture passages. Make observations on the operation of these characteristics.

Galatians 5:13-14 (love):

John 16:22 (joy):

Romans 5:1 (peace):

2 Timothy 4:2 (patience):

Titus 3:4 (kindness):

Romans 15:14 (goodness):

2 Thessalonians 1:4 (faithfulness/faith):

2 Timothy 2:24-25 (gentleness/gentle):

2 Peter 1:5-6 (self-control):

Grow: Ready for a Harvest

We've talked facts and definitions. Now, let's get personal. It's time to do a fruit check. This is between each of us and God. Spend some quiet time with Him now and reflect on each characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit.

Ask God to show you the quality of the Spirit's fruit in your life. Think about some recent circumstances. In the space below, jot down times you feel the Spirit's character was manifested and times you allowed your natural, sinful character to take over.

Although we will battle our fleshly nature for the rest of our lives, we become more sensitive to the Spirit's leading as we mature and learn to recognize His voice. As we end our study together, I pray God will encourage, strengthen, and grow you in the days ahead!

Let's talk: What did you learn in this study that has encouraged or challenged you the most?

Fruit of the Spirit definition answer key. 1c, 2f, 3h, 4a, 5g, 6b, 7d, 8i, 9e