

## Introduction: Handout #1

### The Fruit of the Spirit

(excerpted from [BibleProject](#))

The Apostle Paul describes “the fruit of the Spirit” as “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23). These qualities reflect God’s character and the behavior of those living according to God’s Spirit.

When we participate with God, we’re like new branches that are grafted into a living vine, which begin to yield the fruit of that vine. So if God is loving, patient, and always emanating peace, then, as we participate with God, we will bear that same spiritual fruit, like love, patience, and peace.

#### **The Source of the Fruit of the Spirit**

By describing these characteristics as the fruit of the Spirit, the Apostle Paul is saying they come from the Holy Spirit, who is God. The Spirit cultivates them within us as part of God’s work of restoring all of creation.

We cannot produce spiritual fruit on our own; we can’t simply will ourselves to be more gentle or work harder to be more joyful or faithful. But Scripture does suggest that human beings somehow take part in providing the conditions for the growth of spiritual fruit. In order for the life of the vine to grow fruit in us, we have to firmly connect ourselves to the vine by pursuing God’s way of life over our own.

#### **Walking by the Spirit**

In Paul’s letter to the Galatians, he encourages people to “walk (or live) by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16). But what does that really mean?

Some traditions describe walking by the Spirit as a kind of **personal surrender** to the Spirit’s transforming work in our minds and hearts. As the Spirit changes our hearts, our behavior also changes, leading us to bear fruit.

Other traditions suggest that walking by the Spirit is about choosing to trust God by **following his instruction**. For example, the choice to love and forgive our neighbor is also a choice to participate with God’s Spirit, which leads to more and more spiritual fruit.

However we understand the mysterious interplay between divine and human action, Paul invites us to cooperate with what the Spirit is doing in us and **create the conditions necessary for God to cultivate within us** the spiritual fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—the priceless fruit that brings healing and life to everyone.

## **Fruits of the Spirit: Summary List**

When Paul listed individual fruits in Galatians 5:22-23, he was not attempting to create an exhaustive list. He could have expanded it with characteristics like compassion and humility (Col. 3:12) or steadfastness (2 Tim. 3:10). But the nine fruits Paul mentions in Galatians offer a summary sketch of what life in the Spirit looks like.

- **Love** (*Agape*): Not merely an emotion, but a selfless, sacrificial commitment to act for the highest good of others, modeled after God's love for humanity.
- **Joy**: A deep-rooted contentment and gladness that remains steady regardless of outward circumstances, finding its source in God rather than temporary happiness.
- **Peace**: An inner tranquility and harmony that comes from trusting in God's sovereignty, as well as a commitment to seeking relational unity with others.
- **Patience** (*Forbearance*): The ability to endure difficult people or trying circumstances without lashing out in anger; it is often described as being "slow to anger".
- **Kindness**: Active goodness shown toward others through friendliness, compassion, and a genuine concern for their needs.
- **Goodness**: Moral integrity and an uprightness of heart that expresses itself in doing what is right and honorable toward all people.
- **Faithfulness**: Reliability and steadfast loyalty in one's commitments to God and to others; being a person who can be trusted and depended upon over time.
- **Gentleness** (*Meekness*): Strength under control; it involves a humble and mild spirit that corrects or interacts with others with a "soft touch" rather than force.
- **Self-Control**: The mastery over one's own desires, impulses, and passions, particularly the discipline to prioritize spiritual values over physical cravings.