



Session 5: Fruit



As disciples of Jesus, we sometimes mistakenly measure our progress in terms of how often we pray, read the Bible, turn up for church or even how much we give.

Instead we should focus on how patient we are, how much kindness we demonstrate the evidence of peace, joy and love in our lives. These are the fruits of the Spirit which God promises to grow in us.

Previous session review

- Recap on your experience of the previous challenge. How did it go? Was it helpful?
- If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question: Where and how did you experience God last week?

Read

Read the passage several times through, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. At the end of the text you will find helpful background information in our 'Setting the Scene' section.
As you read, look out for shockers and blockers.

Shockers – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

Blockers – something from the text that raises questions for you.

Galatians 5.13–26

My friends, you were chosen to be free. So don't use your freedom as an excuse to do anything you want. Use it as an opportunity to serve each other with love. All that the Law says can be summed up in the command to love others as much as you love yourself. But if you keep attacking each other like wild animals, you had better watch out or you will destroy yourselves. If you are guided by the Spirit, you won't obey your selfish desires. The Spirit and your desires are enemies of each other. They are always fighting each other and keeping you from doing what you feel you should. But if you obey the Spirit, the Law of Moses has no control over you.

People's desires make them give in to immoral ways, filthy thoughts, and shameful deeds. They worship idols, practice witchcraft, hate others, and are hard to get along with. People become jealous, angry, and selfish. They not only argue and cause trouble, but they are envious. They get drunk, carry on at wild parties, and do other evil things as well. I told you before, and I am telling you again: No one who does these things will share in the blessings of God's kingdom. God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. There is no law against behaving in any of these ways. And because we belong to Christ Jesus, we have killed our selfish feelings and desires. God's Spirit has given us life, and so we should follow the Spirit. But don't be conceited or make others jealous by claiming to be better than they are.

Setting the scene:

- Galatians is a huge Roman province. Paul wrote to churches he founded in the region. He insisted that repentance and faith in Christ was all that were needed to receive this new life with God – but now some Jewish teachers were arguing that non-Jews needed to be circumcised and observe Jewish laws. Paul was not happy and suggested they go and castrate themselves (5.12)!
- So in chapter 5 Paul begins a magnificent argument for 'freedom in Christ'. Christ has saved us to set us free – not to live permissive, indulgent lives, but to live as God's children.
- Paul contrasts two lists of behaviours – the first are the result of fallen human desires. Flesh here does not refer to bodily flesh but to humanity when opposed to God. The second set of behaviours are the result of faith in Christ and the impact of the Spirit upon our lives. Sometimes referred to as the 'fruit of the Spirit'.
- 'Fruit' is an old metaphor and one that was appropriate in the agricultural setting of the ancient world. Jesus also spoke about 'recognising a tree by its fruit' (Matt 7.16).

Reflect

After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.

Begin your reflection time by each naming your shockers and blockers. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.

You might also like to explore these questions:

Q1. Which of the 'fruits' listed in verses 22-23 do feel is least evident in you? Which ones come more easily to you?

Q2. Which of the fruits would you like to be most evident in your life right now?

'The Holy Spirit empowers believers. God, as Spirit, dwells in each of us. It is our job to surrender ourselves to the awesome work of the Holy Spirit and to engage in activities that enable the Spirit to equip and empower us.'

*Richard J Foster,
Streams Of Living Water*

Respond

Fruit challenge: This session opens up the 'fruit' of the Spirit which come to us through interaction with the Holy Spirit. As a group, create a challenge that will help you to develop more of these fruits or choose from the following list.

Challenge ideas: If you struggle to come up with your own challenge then why not try one of the following...

1. Examen (self-examination)

Paul says we are to 'keep in step' with the Spirit. Set aside time this week to reflect on the passage from Galatians and keep in mind the different fruits mentioned as you go about your daily interactions with people. At the end of the day, take some time to reflect on where you felt you demonstrated love, joy, peace etc. and also where you struggled. Use this time of self-examination to help you become more aware of the Spirit at work in your life. If you are a parent, reflect on how much patience you have, if you are under stress at work, how much self-control do you demonstrate. Don't beat yourself up, just be aware and ask the Spirit to increase these fruits in you.

2. Top banana

Choose a fruit of the Spirit that you would particularly like to see grow in you. Spend this week focussing on this fruit, asking God to develop that quality in you and looking for opportunities to work on it.

3. Chastity

Chastity is often thought of as simply refraining from sexual contact, but it means more than that, it means treating all people with dignity and respect. The last fruit mentioned in Galatians refers to 'self-control' – with reference to sexual behaviour. This week, commit to treating each person you meet as someone made in the image of God. You can practically practice this by intentionally focusing your eyes on their face rather than other parts of their body.

Group Prayer

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group this week as you focus on being filled with the Spirit and developing the fruits described in Galatians.