

Back To Basics

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SPECIAL ISSUE:

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Johnie Edwards

This special issue of *Back To Basics* is based on the words of Paul to the churches of Galatia:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).

The word “fruit” is used on the pages of Biblical Writ to describe a number of spiritual concepts.

THE GALATIAN CHURCH. The churches of Galatia were troubled churches. There were those who “would pervert the gospel of Christ” by preaching another gospel, when there really was no other (Gal. 1:6-9). They had been “bewitched” as to how faith justifies (Gal. 3). They were troubled about which law was really binding (Gal. 3:19-29). The keeping of special days troubled some of them (Gal. 4:11-12). Evidently, there were those who thought their “liberty in Christ” allowed them to use that “for an occasion of the flesh” (Gal. 5:13). So, Paul warns them about “the works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21).

A NEEDED FRUIT. The wise man stated, “The fruit of the righteous is the tree of life;

and he that winneth souls is wise” (Prov. 11:30). After Jesus urged early disciples to “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest,” He uttered, “gathereth fruit unto life eternal” (Jn. 4:35-36). Paul desired to “have some fruit” among the Roman Christians (Rom. 1:13), just as he was concerned about “the fruit of his labour” (Phil. 1:22). Each of us needs to be fruit-bearing as we “teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT. This special issue of *Back To Basics* is designed to call to our attention the fruit of the Spirit. This fruit is called the fruit of the Spirit because it is produced by Holy Spirit teaching (Gal. 5:22). The fruit is of singular form as it is produced by “the unity of the Spirit” as contrasted with the antagonistic “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21). The Galatians experienced conflict between the flesh and the Spirit as they were urged to, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). As you continue to read this special issue, please learn all you can about this fruit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance because there has never been a law against such (Gal. 5:22-23).

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BIBLE FRUIT

John Isaac Edwards

The Bible is a basket abounding with fruit. Various types of fruit are mentioned frequently throughout the Scriptures.

LITERAL FRUIT. In the beginning, God created “the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind” for man’s consumption (Gen. 1:11-12, 29). Among the most common fruit of this kind are grapes, pomegranates, and figs (Num. 13:23).

CHILDREN. The word “fruit” is often used of one’s progeny. The expressions, “fruit of thy body” (Dt. 28:4), “fruit of the womb” (Ps. 127:3) and “fruit of his loins” (Acts 2:30) refer to one’s offspring; descendants.

CONSEQUENCES. The Scriptures use agricultural terms to express the consequences of one’s actions. To “eat of the fruit of their own way” (Prov. 1:31) and “eat the fruit of their doings” (Is. 3:10) has to do with the principle, “for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7-8).

WORDS. A man’s words are “the fruit of his mouth” (Prov. 12:14). The Hebrew writer spoke of “the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb. 13:15). Jesus represented men as trees and their words as fruit, in Matthew 12:33-37. James used this analogy as well (Jas. 3:10-12).

ACTIONS. The conduct of men is referred to as “fruit.” Paul commanded, “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work...” (Col. 1:10). Actions produced in one’s life, good or bad, are fruit.

CONVERTS. “...the firstfruits of Achaia” (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:15) were those who were begotten

in Christ through the gospel seed (1 Cor. 4:15; Lk. 8:11).

CONTRIBUTIONS. Paul called the contribution for the poor Jerusalem saints “fruit” (Rom. 15:26-28).

CHARACTER. “The fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22) is the character produced in the life of one who walks in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-26). This singular fruit comes in a cluster: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Gal. 5:22-23). This issue is dedicated to a special study of this fruit.

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WOMEN WHO BROUGHT FORTH FRUIT

Melba Edwards

As we look to the Scriptures concerning the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), some women come to mind who brought forth fruit. Let's look at some.

LOIS AND EUNICE HAD AN UNFEIGNED FAITH. The fruit of the Spirit is faith. We read about Lois and Eunice in 2 Timothy 1:5. Paul wrote to Timothy and said, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." The faith which was in Lois and Eunice was an unfeigned faith. It was genuine and sincere; not hypocritical. They didn't say one thing and do another. Is our faith genuine and sincere, or could we just be playing the part? This faith dwelt which means it was inhabiting. This faith lived in them. This faith was seen. Our faith is seen, whether it is genuine or hypocritical. It dwelt first in Timothy's grandmother, Lois. It was a faith that she in turn taught and showed her daughter, Timothy's mother, Eunice. Timothy's mother was a Jewess and believed, but his father was a Greek (Acts 16:1). It was taught and shown so well, that Timothy had that kind of faith. Our children and grandchildren see our faith. Do they see this kind of faith in us? Are we teaching them and showing them this faith so they in turn will have this faith? These women set such a wonderful example for us. This Scripture shows the powerful influence of a grandmother and mother. Let's use that influence wisely.

RUTH SHOWED KINDNESS. Gentleness

or kindness is the fruit of the Spirit. Boaz saw kindness in Ruth. Ruth 3:10-11 reads, "And he said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." Ruth showed Boaz kindness and he had seen the kindness she had shown to her mother-in-law, Naomi. Does our gentleness or kindness show to others, as well as in our family relationships?

HOLY WOMEN, WHO TRUSTED IN GOD, ADORNED THEMSELVES WITH A MEEK AND QUIET SPIRIT. Meekness is the fruit of the Spirit. 1 Peter 3:4 says, "But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." The word "meek" here means, gentle, kind, not easily provoked, ready to yield rather than cause trouble. In the context of this passage, Peter is speaking to wives. Wives should have this meek spirit which yields rather than causes trouble in the home. If she is meek, she is not easily angered. Our children will certainly see whether we have a spirit of meekness. In the sight of God, this meek and quiet spirit is of great price.

We would do well to pattern our lives after these women of the Bible so we too will bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.

THE WARFARE BETWEEN THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT

Marc W. Gibson

Spiritual warfare is necessary to protect the soul from evil. Paul admonished Timothy to “wage the good warfare” and to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 1:18; 6:12). The Christian is to clothe himself with “the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day” (Eph. 6:13). There is no greater struggle that we face day by day than the warfare between the flesh and the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-26).

LIBERTY IN CHRIST. The Christian enjoys the wonderful liberty “by which Christ has made us free” (Gal. 5:1; Jn. 8:31-32; Rom. 6:6-7). Paul, in keeping with the theme of Galatians, warns the brethren not to go back to the law which would cause them to fall from grace (vv. 1-6). Our liberty is exercised by “faith working through love” (v. 6), which is fulfilled by keeping the commandments of God (1 Cor. 7:19).

Paul makes an important point that this call to liberty is not to be used “as an opportunity for the flesh” (v. 13). We are to serve one another through love as commanded by God. Serving the things of the flesh would be in opposition to this desire and goal.

FLESH VS. SPIRIT. Let there be no misunderstanding—what Paul identifies as the flesh and the Spirit are “against” and “contrary to” one another (v. 17). There is no peace or compromise that can join these two opposing forces together. Those who “walk in the Spirit” will not “fulfill the lust of the flesh” (v. 16), because they belong to Christ and have “crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (v. 24). What is the meaning of the conflicting ideas of “flesh” and “Spirit”?

The flesh is the unrestrained fleshly lusts of man (i.e. power, greed, sex, pleasure). It involves

lascivious sensuality, ungodly attitudes, evil thinking, and immoral actions. The “works of the flesh” (vv. 19-21) identify specific activities that derive from the lusts of men. That they are “evident” means they can be clearly recognized, and those who practice such will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Spirit is the guidance of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the New Testament. All truth was revealed by the Spirit of truth through the apostles (Jn. 16:13; Eph. 3:5), by which was produced the New Testament that furnishes us unto “every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We are “led by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:18) when we are following the guidance of the word revealed by the Spirit of God. Any guidance that is not according to the New Testament is not of the Spirit of God!

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT. The daily challenge of the Christian is to conquer the flesh with its lusts and to “walk in the Spirit” (v. 25). If we are faithful, we will manifest the “fruit of the Spirit” in our lives (vv. 22-23): love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

We are engaged in an intense, real-life struggle for our soul. Shall we follow the flesh with its ungodly passions and desires, or shall we follow the guidance of the Spirit of truth? It all depends on whether I will set my mind on the things of the flesh or the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5). Victory will be ours if we walk in the Spirit, manifest the fruit of the Spirit, and, in the end, reap everlasting life (Gal. 6:8). Is your life demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit?

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LOVE

David Eldridge

“**T**he fruit of the Spirit is love...” (Gal. 5:22). As Christians, we are to “be led by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:18). One is led by the Holy Spirit when he follows His revelatory work—the New Testament (Eph. 3:3-6). Thus, “the fruit of the Spirit” is borne from a life lived “in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16, 22). The first characteristic mentioned by Paul that comes from a Spirit-led life is “love.” Let us consider what the Spirit has revealed about love that we might follow His lead and bear this fruit in our lives.

THE LOVE OF GOD. The apostle John wrote that “God is love” (1 Jn. 4:8, 16). God showed the greatest example of love when He gave His Son for undeserving sinners such as us, offering us salvation (Rom. 5:8; 1 Jn. 3:1). By this example, we “are taught by God to love one another” (1 Th. 4:9). Following His divine teaching, we are to manifest our love in a number of ways.

THE FRUIT OF LOVING GOD. When asked what the first and great commandment is, Jesus answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment” (Mt. 22:36-38). No part of our being should be withheld from this love—we must wholeheartedly love God. There is a reason why we love Him. John penned, “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 Jn. 4:19). Yet, loving God is much more than just saying the words. Loving God requires action! “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (1 Jn. 5:3). The test of one’s love for God is whether or not he keeps His commands. If one claims to love God but does not do His will, he is a liar. As we are led by the Spirit, we will bring forth the fruit of loving God.

THE FRUIT OF LOVING OUR BRETHREN. Peter commands that we should “...in sincere love of

the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart” (1 Pet. 1:22). A sincere, fervent, and pure love must be shown to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (Jn. 13:34). Notice the commanded degree of love among brethren—as Christ has loved us. How did Christ love us? He put us above Himself and sacrificed His life for us. Following His example, Christians are called to a degree of love that would be willing to “lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 Jn. 3:16). If one is commanded to go to this length, we also need to do everything short of it; showing love for our brethren in our care, consideration, and kindness towards them. Keeping the command of loving our brethren will show the world that we are Jesus’ disciples (Jn. 13:35). However, “He who does not love his brother abides in death” (1 Jn. 3:14). As we are led by the Spirit, we will bring forth the fruit of loving our brethren.

THE FRUIT OF LOVING OUR NEIGHBORS. Jesus affirmed that the second great commandment is, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt. 22:39). When confronted with this truth, a certain lawyer asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (Lk. 10:29). Jesus answered this question with the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30-37). We are called to show love, compassion, and mercy to our fellow man. Additionally, the greatest love that one can manifest towards his neighbor is in teaching him the will of God that he might be saved. Let us ever busy ourselves with this important work as we show love to our neighbors. As we are led by the Spirit, we will bring forth the fruit of loving our neighbors.

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Joy

Craig Thomas

A famous denominational “evangelist” once said, “The trouble with many men is that they have got just enough religion to make them miserable. If there is not joy in religion, you have got a leak in your religion” (*Billy Sunday, New York, 1914*). How about you? Does your relationship with God bring you joy or misery? Are you bearing the fruit of the Spirit in your life to the point you can join in hearty agreement with Paul and shout, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Phil. 4:4)? Let’s consider:

THE JOY OF TRIALS. Those of the world only experience joy when “good” things happen to them. However, a Christian can even find joy when dark clouds of gloom gather. James says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials” (Jas. 1:2). How can such be the case? Because in the furnace of trials our faith is tested and refined (1 Pet. 1:6-7); such that our patience grows (Jas. 1:3), our Christian character develops, and we gain a hope that is sure, steadfast, and “does not disappoint” (Rom. 5:3-5). Rejoice!

THE JOY OF PERSECUTION. In a similar vein, Christians can find great joy in persecutions. “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake” (Mt. 5:11). Persecutions are a source of joy and rejoicing because they provide us “great...reward in heaven,” they place us in the elite company of “the prophets who were before you” (Mt. 5:12), and, as was the case with the apostles, they provide proof we are “counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41). Rejoice!

THE JOY OF FELLOWSHIP. Paul told the Philippian brethren that they had fulfilled his joy “by

being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Phil. 2:2). Every local church should be worthy of the same praise. And, the fact that God has granted us as His children the honor and privilege of association with such people should provide us with a fount of overflowing joy! John said he had “no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 Jn. 4). Let us also be joyful in our association with faithful brethren! Rejoice!

THE JOY OF SALVATION. The twelfth chapter of Isaiah so eloquently expresses this aspect of joy. “Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; ‘For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.’ Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation” (Is. 12:2-3). Free of charge, God has solved our greatest problem (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 3:23; 6:23) and preserved our most valuable asset (Mt. 16:26). Instead of being “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), He has “made us alive together with Christ... and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places” (Eph. 2:5-6). Rejoice!

THE JOY OF ETERNAL LIFE. Jesus said words to two reliable stewards that every faithful Christian longs to hear on that Great Day: “Well done good and faithful servant...Enter into the joy of your lord” (Mt. 25:23). What a joy twill be after fighting the good fight, finishing the race, and keeping the faith that we too are presented that glorious “crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:6-8). What joy twill be to experience no more tears, no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, and no more pain (Rev. 21:4). “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice!”

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PEACE

Donnie V. Rader

The third characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit is peace.

THE MEANING OF PEACE. W.E. Vine says it is “harmonious relationships between men...” Thayer defines it as “a state of national tranquility; exemption from the rage and havoc of war ... peace between individuals, i.e. harmony, concord...” The peace that comes from following the revelation of the Holy Spirit involves more than the mere absence of conflict. It is more positive, suggesting harmonious relationships. Kenneth Wuest says it is “tranquility of mind based on the consciousness of a right relationship to God” (*Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*).

THE DIRECTION OF PEACE. Following the Spirit’s instructions, we have peace with God (Rom. 5:1). No longer are we enemies of God (Rom. 8:7). We also have peace with our fellow man. We are told, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18). The Jews and Gentiles (who were enemies) were made one (united) through the death of Christ (Eph. 2:11-22). Peace among brethren is likewise of utmost importance. We should be united in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). Paul urged the brethren to “be at peace among yourselves” (1 Th. 5:13). When we are at peace with God, our fellow man and our brethren, we will have peace with ourselves (Phil. 4:7).

THE SOURCE OF PEACE. The Lord is the source of our peace. He is called the “prince of peace” (Is. 9:6-7). When we obey the Lord, we then have peace. Paul wrote, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). After

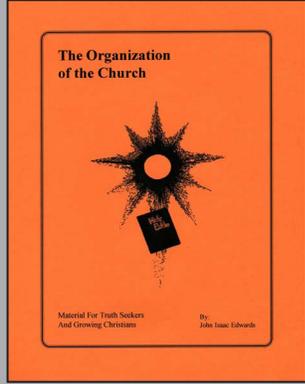
all, the word is called the “gospel of peace” (Rom. 10:15).

WORKING TOWARD PEACE. Peace doesn’t just happen. We must continually work to have peaceful relationships. Peter said we must seek and pursue it (1 Pet. 3:10-11). Paul urged the church at Rome, “Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another” (Rom. 14:19). The context of both passages shows how we seek peace (1 Pet. 3:8-9).

THE LIMITATIONS OF PEACE. Peace with the world and peace with brethren is not to be gained at any cost. Faith must not be compromised (Jude 3). James said that wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable (Jas. 3:17-18).

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LONGSUFFERING

Keith Welch

When was the last time you said you wanted to suffer long? The word employed in Galatians 5:22 for “longsuffering” is “that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy, and is used of God” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*). An open and studied Bible reveals...

THE LONGSUFFERING OF DAVID. King Saul and his servant David were returning from the slaughter of the Philistines when women came out of all the cities of Israel to greet the king, and they sang, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Sam. 18:6-7). Saul became very angry, envious and, from that point on, King Saul persecuted David and sought his life. The servant David was longsuffering toward King Saul. David had several occasions in which he could have killed King Saul, but he exercised self-restraint, mercy or longsuffering (1 Sam. 24, 26).

THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD. Peter penned in 2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” There is a great day coming in “which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). As defined in *New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, “Men may tempt and provoke Him, and He does display patience in regard to them (Ex. 34:6; Rom. 2:4; 1 Pet. 3:20)... God is the author of patience in His servants (Rom. 15:5).” God is longsuffering toward us!

THE LONGSUFFERING OF CHRIST. Christ was nailed to the cross guilty of no crime. He is the “Son of God” (Jn. 1:34) and “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29), “without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:19). Jesus was “without sin” (Heb. 4:15) and “did no sin” (1 Pet. 2:22). Peter wrote concerning the longsuffering of Christ, “when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not...” (1 Pet. 2:23). Jesus was provoked, spat upon, called names, laughed at, beaten, and much more. Jesus said He could have called thousands of angels, “But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Mt. 26:53-54). Christ was longsuffering toward men and women!

THE LONGSUFFERING OF THE CHRISTIAN. A Christian is exhorted to have the disposition of longsuffering (Gal. 5:22). The basic idea is to be long tempered. A Christian is to be patient with others. Even those who revile, persecute, antagonize, procrastinate, provoke, and injure. First century Christians endured persecution, even to the point of death. Paul went through a list of situations and people with whom he exercised longsuffering (2 Cor. 11:22-28). James gave this commentary on longsuffering: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (Jas. 1:19-20). Longsuffering is developed when one follows God’s word. Jesus spoke saying, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (Jn. 15:2).

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GENTLENESS

Jeff Souder

Gentleness is that trait or characteristic describing one who possesses power at such a level as to do potential harm, but exercises control and restraint over it and manages it. Whenever we handle antiques or family heirlooms, we are gentle with them so they are not damaged. Whenever we cradle babies, we are gentle with them. Live-stock farmers look for this desirable trait in their animals, especially cattle and large draft horses. If a farmer has a large bull that is “gentle,” then he knows his bull will not tear down his fences nor gore his family. Likewise, we need to be gentle with the power we possess (the knowledge of the gospel message) so that we do not bludgeon the souls we are trying to win, nor harm our congregational family. Let’s look at a few reasons why we need to be gentle.

JESUS LEFT US AN EXAMPLE OF GENTLENESS. The Messiah was prophesied as a gentle leader (Is. 40:11). Even though Jesus has all power and authority, during His earthly ministry He did not bludgeon souls with His message (Lk. 9:56). He spoke honestly and gently with the woman at the well (Jn. 4:1-42), when she presupposed He would be an arrogant Jew. He spoke gently with the woman caught in adultery (Jn. 8:1-11), and with Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1-10). He felt compassion on the multitudes (Mt. 9:35-38).

JESUS PRAISED GENTLENESS IN OTHERS. The centurion knew the importance of authority, but controlled and subjugated his power when asking Jesus to heal his servant. Jesus was impressed and praised the centurion’s faith (Mt. 8:5-13). The apostles were given power and authority (Lk. 9:1), but when they began to argue about greatness, Jesus taught them to subdue those thoughts (Lk. 9:46-48; 22:24-27).

THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS TAUGHT GENTLENESS IN THEIR EPISTLES. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were themselves gentle (1 Th. 2:7), and Paul later reminded Timothy that servants of the Lord are to be gentle (2 Tim. 2:24). Paul also wrote to Titus that his listeners, both men and women, are to be gentle unto all (Ti. 3:1-2). When we use the wisdom from above, it is recognized as gentle (Jas. 3:17).

GENTLENESS IS THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT. We are expected to bear fruit (Lk. 8:15; Jn. 15:8), and by our fruits we are known (Mt. 7:20). One day Jesus inspected a fruit tree, and it was judged and made to wither because it was not bearing fruit (Mt. 21:19). When Jesus comes again and inspects us, will we be bearing gentleness?

Let us resolve to not be cruel and unsympathetic in the way we treat others. Just as the children were at ease around Jesus (Mt. 19:14; Mk. 10:16), people are at ease around a truly gentle Christian. May our lights shine, with gentleness, to our brethren, and the lost and dying world around us!

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GOODNESS

Jeremy Sweets

According to Paul's letter to the Galatians, being a Christian is more than a title of distinction. It has serious implications for how one will live his life. The Spirit and the flesh are competing for an individual's desires, and it is evident which one a person is following (Gal. 5:17). Those who live after the flesh bring forth the works of the flesh, but Spirit-led individuals produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-23). Goodness is listed among the fruit of the Spirit as an essential quality of every Christian. Consider some points about this important characteristic.

GOD IS THE MEASURE OF GOODNESS. The fruit of the Spirit has its origin in the Spirit of God. God perfectly displays each quality, setting the standard for every thought and action (Mt. 5:48). When man follows his own path, he goes astray, but God's way is always right. He alone defines what is good (Lk. 18:19). Those who pursue God will naturally produce the fruit of His character. When God is the chief focus of our desire, His goodness will be displayed in our lives.

GOODNESS REFERS TO MORAL EXCELLENCE. In its most general sense, goodness is defined as a quality of moral excellence, being good, goodness, uprightness. Thayer defines it as "uprightness of heart and life." While every man is a sinner, incapable of achieving perfect goodness, the new man in Christ will strive to grow into the image of Jesus (Rom. 8:29). This word is active in nature, implying zeal and energy for what is good. It necessitates honesty and integrity. With a singular focus, the heart must be guided by the standard of the Spirit. Even when the decision is difficult, right behavior must be pursued. The Christian who possesses the quality of goodness takes a stand for the truth and may even need to lovingly rebuke or chastise others for the sake of what is right.

GOODNESS INCLUDES GENEROSITY. Another definition more specifically identifies goodness as a positive moral quality characterized especially by interest in the welfare of others; generosity. Goodness will inevitably be directed to other people. We have all been recipients of God's bountiful giving, and we should give to others. The degree of our giving should be liberal and generous. There is no need to hoard our blessings because we trust God for our future security, not wealth or possessions (Lk. 12:13-21; 1 Tim. 6:18). The Bible directs goodness to be shown to all people, especially fellow Christians (Gal. 6:10). In particular, generosity should be shown to the poor and needy (Eph. 4:28). Kindness and goodness must even be displayed to enemies and those who persecute us (Mt. 5:43-47; Rom. 12:19-21).

When trees and plants receive plenty of water and sunshine, they grow and bear much fruit. In the same way, when Christians abide in Christ as their source of strength, they bear the fruit of the Spirit (Jn. 15:1-6). Goodness is the fruit that every Christian must bear. It involves living a life actively devoted to moral excellence and purity. Goodness will not only be lived but shared with others. Every Christian should be known for their generosity and willingness to give.

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FAITH

Joe R. Price

Faith has been described as taking God at His word and doing whatever He says (Heb. 11:1, 6). A person who lives by faith is faithful to God (2 Cor. 5:7). He is reliable and dependable toward the things of God. He is trustworthy to the cause of Christ. He can be counted on to obey the word of God. On the other hand, unfaithfulness to God shows a lack of faith in God. The fruit of the Spirit includes “faith” (KJV) or “faithfulness” (NKJV, ASV) (Gal. 5:22).

FAITHFULNESS IN LITTLE THINGS. Our faithfulness is seen by how we handle “little” things. Jesus said, “He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much” (Lk. 16:10). Jesus used our care for material things to illustrate how we will care for spiritual things.

FAITHFUL SERVANTS. Oh, how faithfulness is needed in the church of Christ! Faithfulness is a matter of loyalty to Christ. The “faithful and wise servant” is loyal to his lord, honestly fulfilling his duties as a servant even when his master is not personally present to oversee his work (Mt. 24:45-47). God sees and knows what we say and do. If we are unfaithful (unreliable, negligent and disloyal) servants, we will receive eternal punishment when we face our Master (Mt. 24:48-51). Let us be faithful to God by fulfilling the tasks He gives us in His house, the church (1 Cor. 4:2; Rom. 12:3-8; 3 Jn. 5-8).

FAITHFULNESS IN FAMILIES. Consider what a difference it would make in the world if faithfulness were in every home. What if every husband and every wife were loyal to each other; if each could totally trust the other to be faithful to the

interests and welfare of their marriage? Broken homes would be eliminated. What God has joined together would stay together (Mt. 19:6). Millions of parents and children would not face the emotional, financial, and spiritual devastation of divorce. The positive impact on society would be tremendous. The effects of unfaithfulness on the family are profound, including infidelity, child and spousal abuse, selfishness, poverty, neglect and chaos (1 Pet. 3:1-2, 5-7; Eph. 5:22-33).

FAITHFULNESS AT WORK. Faithfulness on the job is required of the Christian; he works with “all good fidelity” (Ti. 2:9-10). Here, the Christian’s faithfulness is contrasted with insubordination, abusive confrontation, and stealing from his master. When a Christian is trustworthy at work, he beautifies the gospel (v. 10). When he is unfaithful, he tarnishes his name and blackens the name of Christ.

FAITHFUL WHEN TEMPTED TO SIN. We need faithfulness to resist temptations. Withstanding temptation is accomplished through faith (1 Pet. 5:8-9; 1:6-9; 1 Jn. 5:4).

Being faithful calls for all our energy to be directed toward heaven (Col. 3:1-3). Faithfulness helps us be deliberate and diligent in fulfilling our duties to the Lord (Heb. 6:11-12). Obedience to Christ increases our faith and assures us the victory of faith, eternal life (Lk. 17:5-10; Rev. 17:14; Heb. 10:36-39). The Lord promised, “...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

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MEEKNESS

Mark Mayberry

Meekness reflects a spirit of humble submission to God, resulting in a gentle and compassionate disposition toward mankind. Despite common misconceptions, nowhere in Scripture does this word have an abject or dishonorable meaning.

DEFINITION. This virtue is communicated by the Greek noun *prautēs*, which occurs 11 times in the NT, and the adjective *praus*, occurring 4 times. Both refer to “the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance, gentleness, humility, courtesy, considerateness, meekness in the older favorable sense” (*Bauer, Danker, Arndt & Gingrich*).

DISTINCTION. Many equate meekness with weakness, yet, nothing could be more mistaken. The meek are mighty in God’s power and purpose. Gentleness is present, but so also is strength. According to the KJV, “Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). Consider the courage he manifested in leading the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex. 14:13-14). Reflect on his firmness in rebuking their subsequent idolatry (Ex. 32:25-28).

THE MEEKNESS OF CHRIST. Our Lord manifested a spirit of true meekness (Mt. 11:28-29). He showed gentleness in dealing with penitent sinners (Lk. 7:37-50). Yet, he was unyielding when faced with defiance, resolutely cleansing the temple (Jn. 2:14-17) and sternly denouncing the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees (Mt. 23:13-15).

THE MEEKNESS OF MAN. Primarily directed towards God, meekness is an attitude of heart wherein we accept His dealings with us as just and good, and obey His word without disputing or resisting. Meekness expresses our confidence in God’s wisdom. It is,

therefore, the basis of divine acceptance (Ps. 37:11; Is. 11:4; Mt. 5:5; Jas. 1:21-22).

We should manifest meekness toward fellow Christians (Eph. 4:1-3; Col. 3:12-13; Jas. 3:13-18). Brethren may try our patience, but let us endeavor to be meek and gentle, recognizing that such is essential for maintaining unity.

We must manifest meekness in attempting to restore those who are erring (Gal. 6:1-2). Faithful servants gently correct those who are in opposition to the truth (2 Tim. 2:23-26). Does this mean that one uses such mild language that the transgressor hardly knows that he has been admonished? No! Reproofs must be forcefully administered as circumstances demand. In confronting the wayward and wicked, we must speak with the power and authority of the gospel. Confidence in God’s plan leads us to humbly and courageously rebuke those who have gone astray.

A Christian woman may find herself married to an unbeliever. Perhaps she has repeatedly tried to convert her spouse, but to no avail. What then? She should continue to demonstrate a gentle and quiet spirit, living a life of faithful service and submission. Meekness may melt the heart when words have failed! (1 Pet. 3:1-4).

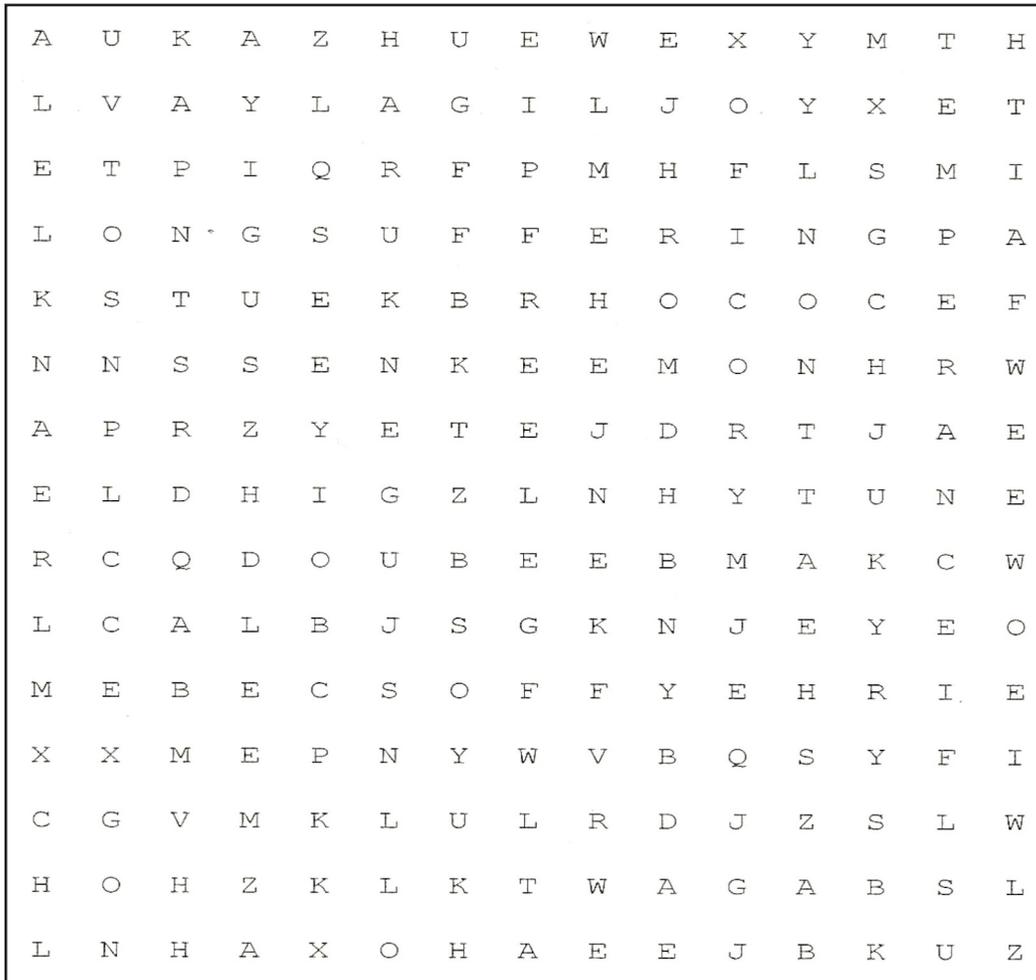
We should manifest meekness toward mankind in general (Ti. 3:1-2; 1 Pet. 3:15). As a practical expression of the Golden Rule, the mindset of the meek is exactly the opposite of the demanding, self-centered persona who regards none but himself. Those who walk before God in a spirit of meekness will be rewarded for their faithfulness (Zeph. 2:3; 3:12). Are you manifesting such a godly spirit, or are you overly impressed with your own self-importance?

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Kids Activity Page

Aleisha Edwards

The Fruit of the Spirit



FAITH
JOY
MEEKNESS

GENTLENESS
LONGSUFFERING
PEACE

GOODNESS
LOVE
TEMPERANCE

**"Suffer the little children to come unto me,
and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).**

TEMPERANCE

Paul Sullins

Last among the fruit of the Spirit, and essential to our overcoming the works of the flesh, is temperance. It is the ability to exercise restraint over one's own impulses, emotions, or desires (i.e. self control). In 2 Peter 1:6, it is listed among those things we are to add to our faith, thus making it essential for faithfulness and proper spiritual growth. Please notice some things requiring the use of temperance.

WORLDLY DESIRES. As Christians, you and I face the same temptations that other people do. However, we are expected to resist and overcome them (1 Cor. 10:13). "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:13-15). Temperance will help us avoid fulfilling those desires which are sinful and destructive to the soul!

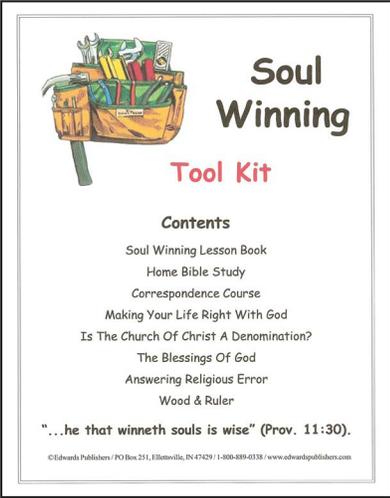
OUR SPEECH. In James 3:2-8, the tongue is described as a small but powerful member of the body. And though it is impossible to tame, it must be controlled. Profanity, gossip, and lying are just a few examples of unacceptable speech. Jesus said, "That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Mt. 12:36-37). This alone should motivate us to control every aspect of our speech.

OUR THOUGHTS. Because men cannot read our minds, it can be more tempting to meditate on things which are sinful. But let us be reminded that

our Creator knows them all, regardless how private we may believe them to be (2 Chr. 6:30). In Mark 7:21-22, Jesus identifies the sins of an intemperate mind: "...evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." Temperance is a must for our thoughts! Philippians 4:8 contains a list of godly things which Christians are to meditate on: things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report.

Today, many seek to justify their sinful conduct by the "inability to control themselves." This is totally foreign to what the Bible says! If heaven is to one day be our home, we must strive to add and practice the much needed virtue of temperance!

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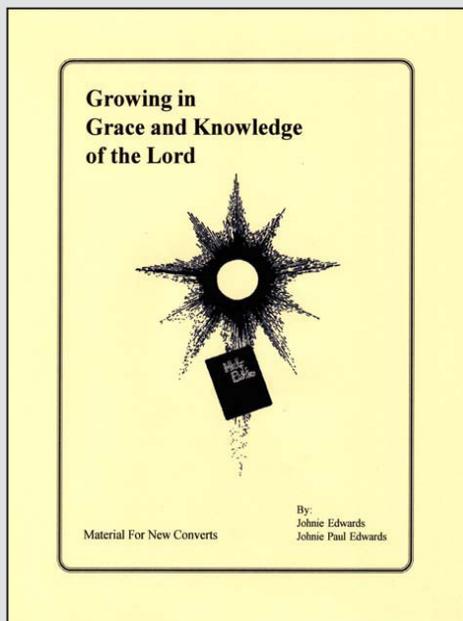
"...he that winneth souls is wise" (Prov. 11:30).

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