

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT



**10 DAYS
TO MORE
CHRISTLIKE
CHARACTER**



NEW VALLEY
DOWNTOWN

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy,
peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;
against such things there is no law.
And those who belong to Christ
Jesus have crucified the flesh with its
passions and desires.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also
keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-25

Dear friends,

There are saints in the world. Occasionally, I meet someone (usually older than me) that seems to have what I would describe as a thoroughly (not perfectly!) godly character. They trust in Jesus completely. They know their limits. Their lives reflect communion with the Holy One. They love and serve others as naturally as if they are breathing.

The question I always walk away with is—how did they get that? What led them to that place? And the natural follow up question: What am I becoming? If I keep living my life the way I do, what will it lead to in 10-50 years? In other words: What will be the fruit?

Fruit just means the outward results of inner character. The Bible answers that godly fruit comes from ONE place: The Spirit of God. It's not something we can attain by trying really hard. It also does not refer to natural personality (though certainly some people are more naturally kind, patient, or self-controlled than others). Fruit only comes from God. Just like the process of growing anything, it takes time and the results are gradual.

So how do we get this fruit? First, we create the conditions for growth in our life. Then, we ask for God to grow what we plant. This devotional is designed to prime the pump on these two things. I encourage you to create the conditions for growth by setting apart 10 minutes in the morning, and 10 minutes in the evening to go through these Scriptures and prayers. But the focus of every day is simple: We are just asking God to do this in us! It is a request that God delights to answer.

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Heavenly Father, I pray that this day I
may live in your presence and
please you more and more

Lord Jesus, I pray that this day I may
take up my cross and follow you.

Holy Spirit, I pray that this day you
will fill me with yourself and cause
your fruit to ripen in my life: love, joy,
peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness, and self-
control.

John Stott's daily morning prayer

Day 1 | Ask for the Holy Spirit

Morning Reading

Did you know that you can pray directly to the Holy Spirit? We often begin our prayers to by saying "Our Father..." or "Jesus..." but rarely "Holy Spirit..." Why? The Holy Spirit is God! In fact, He is the way we experience the Father and grow into the image of the Son. The Bible is clear, without the Holy Spirit there is no change in our lives.

Do you want to become more loving? More joyful? More at peace? More patient? That is what this 10 day journey is all about. But the only way to have lasting change in any of these is by the Spirit. "Fruit of the Spirit" means that these are the RESULTS that happen to us when we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. Every Christian already has the Holy Spirit. However, we grow deeper when we become aware of where the Holy Spirit is leading, teaching, and encouraging rather than trying to live with a sense of control and "making things happen" on our own.

Prayerfully read this morning's Scripture passages and conclude with slowly praying John's Stott's daily prayer.

Read: John 3:5-8; John 16: 5-15; Romans 8:1-11

Evening Prayer

Take a full minute of silence to become aware of God's loving presence.

Briefly review your day. Think about your day from start to finish. Remember anything that seems significant however big or small.

1. Thank God for every good gift.
2. Release any questions, concerns, burdens to him.
3. Repent of any sin

Reflect: To what extent were you led by the Spirit today?

Day 2 | Ask for Love

Morning Reading

Agape (Love). *To love, to have affectionate regard...benevolence." More specifically, It means to serve a person for their good and intrinsic value, not for what the person brings you.*

Opposite: *Fear/Self-Protection*

It is no surprise that love is the first fruit. Love is the most important ethic of the Bible. A quick look at Scripture will confirm this. Just before the fruits of the Spirit passage, Paul says that the whole Law is fulfilled by "love your neighbor as yourself" (Gal. 5:14). He is just repeating what Jesus said in the great commandment "Love the Lord your God...Love your neighbor as yourself...all the law and prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt. 22:37-40). The gospel writer of John gives us the command "Love one another" in multiple places (Jn. 13:34-35; Jn 15:12; Jn. 15:17). We could go on and on. Christians should be known for love!

The kind of love mentioned here in the fruit of the Spirit is love for other people. This is the #1 evidence that the Spirit is at work in you. Do you notice an increasing affection for others in a self-less way? It's OK if the answer seems to be "no" at first. Ask for the Spirit to bring love!

Prayerfully read this morning's Scripture passages and conclude with slowly praying John's Stott's daily prayer.

Read: 1 Corinthians 13

Evening Prayer

Take a full minute of silence to become aware of God's LOVE for you.

Briefly review your day. Think about your day from start to finish. Remember anything that seems significant however big or small.

1. Thank God for every good gift.
2. Offer any questions, concerns, or burdens to him.
3. Repent of any sin

Reflect: What were the evidences of Christ-like love today? When did you struggle to love others? Gently offer your successes and failures to God knowing that he cares for you.

Day 3 —Ask for Joy

Morning Reading

Chara (Joy). *“Rejoicing or gladness.” A delight in God for who he is and what he’s done.*

Opposite: *Hopelessness/Despair*

Sit with this question for a minute: What brings you joy? What is it in life that gives you a deep sense of gladness and satisfaction? It’s OK if the answer is boardgames or a bonfire or a certain fountain pen, or something else that you perceive as less “spiritual.” The truth is God has created everything good for our enjoyment. The key is to see every good thing as a gift from him. The reason you enjoy anything is because he has been good to you. The fruit of the Spirit is noticing that whenever you have joy, it’s ultimately because of God.

In Hebrews, the author says that Jesus endured the cross so that he could experience Joy! Jesus’ greatest joy has been accomplishing your redemption. He delights to have you in his family. Our joy must bubble up from the fact that God has taken joy in us! Let the Holy Spirit fill you with gladness this morning! God has delighted in you; now delight in him.

Prayerfully read this morning’s Scripture passages and conclude with slowly praying John’s Stott’s daily prayer.

Read: Psalm 16; Zeph. 3:17; Heb. 12:2

Evening Prayer

Take a full minute of silence to become aware of God’s JOY in you.

Briefly review your day. Think about your day from start to finish. Remember anything that seems significant however big or small.

1. Thank God for every good gift.
2. Offer any questions, concerns, or burdens to him.
3. Repent of any sin

Reflect: Were there moments of joy today? How can you connect those to God’s good gifts? Gently offer your success and failures to God.

Day 4 —Ask for Peace

Morning Reading

Irene (Peace). *“wholeness, soundness, health, well-being, prosperity.” Related to OT word for Shalom. Confidence and rest in God, rather than in your own control.*

Opposite: Anxiety

Peace is a powerful word and concept. The people of Jesus’ day would have greeted each other with “Shalom” which means “Peace, I wish you well” in every sense. Peace is the elusive thing that most of us know that we want on deep level, but count on not having in a meaningful sense. What is peace? Can we actually get it?

We can. In fact, we already have it. Ephesians 2 says that Jesus IS our peace. His sacrifice brought about the reconciliation that brings us peace with God. The war for control and acceptance is actually already over. The problem is that we don’t feel that way. The first step in experiencing peace is asking God to help us see that we already have it. Then we seek to grow in walking with the Spirit into more experience of peace. We learn to accept things the way they are, even if we want them to be different. We learn we can’t control other people. But all of this is the work of the Spirit in us. So ask him to work in you...

Prayerfully read this morning’s Scripture passages and conclude with slowly praying John’s Stott’s daily prayer.

Read: Rom. 5:1-5; Eph. 2:11-22

Evening Prayer

Take a full minute of silence to become aware of the PEACE found in Jesus Christ

Briefly review your day. Think about your day from start to finish. Remember anything that seems significant however big or small.

1. Thank God for every good gift.
2. Offer any questions, concerns, or burdens to him.
3. Repent of any sin

Reflect: When did anxiety strike today? What were the factors that led to this? What would it look like for you to be carried by the Spirit in peace? Gently offer your success and failures to God.

Day 5 —Ask for Patience

Morning Reading

Makrothumia (Patience). *“Self-restraint before proceeding to action.” An ability to face trouble without a resentful quick response.*

Opposite: *Retaliation*

The old-school translation is helpful: “Long-suffering.” To what extent are we able to bear with other people without striking back? What do we do when others are inevitably thoughtless, rude, uncaring, don’t do things our way, etc? How deeply does it affect us? We’ve all had the experience of someone responding to us with more force than we were anticipating. Maybe you made a joke or offered some advice, and they explode with disproportionate anger. It’s obvious at that point that the person is dealing with some deep resentment that goes beyond your conversation.

The truth is that is all of us. What is going on inside us that makes us lash out? A person who is filled with the Spirit does not lash out because they have an abundance of space, reflection and knowledge that they are loved and accepted already. The power for this is found in the patience of Jesus Christ. He endured insults and the cross for crimes he did not commit. He was “silent before his accusers.”

Prayerfully read this morning’s Scripture passages and conclude with slowly praying John’s Stott’s daily prayer.

Read: Micah 7:18-20; 1 Pet. 2:20-24

Evening Prayer

Take a full minute of silence to become aware of how PATIENT God has been toward you.

Briefly review your day. Think about your day from start to finish. Remember anything that seems significant however big or small.

1. Thank God for every good gift.
2. Offer any questions, concerns, or burdens to him.
3. Repent of any sin

Reflect: What is inside me that caused me to react the way I did today?

Day 6 —Ask for Kindness

Morning Reading

Chrestotes (Kindness). *“Being benign and useful.” Serving others willingly and practically for their benefit. Mellowing what is harsh or self-centered.*

Opposite: Severity

We are all too willing to take action if it benefits us. What is our capacity for benefitting others solely for their sake? Kindness goes the extra mile. It is doing unto others what you would have them do for you. The word “Kindness” is related to the Old Testament hebrew word Hesed. In old translations, Hesed is described as “loving-kindness” or just “Kindness” or “Mercy.” It’s God’s willingness to do things for us based on his promises. He stays committed to us.

How committed are you to other people’s good? Are you able to demonstrate love (Love is patient, love is KIND...1 Cor. 13) to others when they are going through a hard time? The only way to have a capacity for that is to be filled with the kindness of God. In Mark’s Gospel (Mark 10) Jesus is talking with the rich young man. Even though the man is depending on his own ability to be saved, and even though he loves his riches more than he loves God...Jesus still looks at him “and loves him.” That is the kindness we need for those who are around us. When others are hard to love, there is a temptation to be severe. But God has been kind to us.

Prayerfully read this morning’s Scripture passages and conclude with slowly praying John’s Stott’s daily prayer.

Read: 1 Sam. 20:14-17; 2nd Sam. 9:1-7; Rom. 2:4

Evening Prayer

Take a full minute of silence to become aware of the KINDNESS of God.

Briefly review your day. Think about your day from start to finish. Remember anything that seems significant however big or small.

1. Thank God for every good gift.
2. Offer any questions, concerns, or burdens to him.
3. Repent of any sin

Reflect: What was your capacity for kindness today? Gently share opportunities (and missed opportunities) with God.

Day 7 —Ask for Goodness

Morning Reading

Agathosune (Goodness). *This is the idea of integrity. Doing right in every situation without fluctuation. Not being two-faced, sometimes acting one way, sometimes another.*

Opposite: *Hypocrisy*

Remember a time when you were speaking harshly to someone like your spouse or child. Suddenly someone else enters the room, or you have to answer your phone and immediately your tone shifts “Hi!” you say very sweetly, sounding different than you did just a second ago. That, unfortunately, is a lack of “goodness.” Goodness means we act with consistent character. It does not mean we are “do-gooders” that try to show people up by being better than them.

Goodness means we do what is right, and we do it with consistency. Equitable, fair, just, dependable—these are adjectives that should describe someone with the character of Christ. The problem of course is that none of us are good. The Bible is clear about that (Rom. 3:23) It’s pretty easy to review your day and see all the different people you felt you needed to become in order to “make it.” Only “God is good all the time...all the time, God is good” as Christians in some denominations say. Today we are asking God to make us a “Rock” just like he is a rock—never changing!

Prayerfully read this morning’s Scripture passages and conclude with slowly praying John’s Stott’s daily prayer.

Read: Psalm 15; Is. 58:6-10

Evening Prayer

Take a full minute of silence to become aware of the GOODNESS of God.

Briefly review your day. Think about your day from start to finish. Remember anything that seems significant however big or small.

1. Thank God for every good gift.
2. Offer any questions, concerns, or burdens to him.
3. Repent of any sin

Reflect: When were you a “different person” today? Be honest with God about your inconsistent character. Ask him for the Spirit! Ask him for goodness.

Day 8 —Ask for Faithfulness

Morning Reading

Pistis (Faithfulness). Steadfast, loyal and true to your word. Trustworthy over long-haul.

Opposite: Opportunism (Being a fair-weather _____)

Faithfulness means that Christians are not fair-weather people. We are not fair-weather friends; we are also not fair-weather in our ethics, our commitment to the Bible, or our cultural positions. God is the only one who is faithful. There is perhaps no better human reflection on this than the words of the hymn "Great is Thy Faithfulness" by Thomas Chisholm:

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
There is no shadow of turning with Thee,
Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not,
As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.

Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!

Prayerfully read this morning's Scripture passages and conclude with slowly praying John's Stott's daily prayer.

Read: Psalm 33:1-5; Luke 16:1-10

Evening Prayer

Take a full minute of silence to become aware of God's FAITHFULNESS

Briefly review your day. Think about your day from start to finish. Remember anything that seems significant however big or small.

1. Thank God for every good gift.
2. Offer any questions, concerns, or burdens to him.
3. Repent of any sin

Reflect: Where is God calling you to be faithful, despite pressure?

Day 9 —Ask for Gentleness

Morning Reading

Prautus (Gentleness). *An inward humility that leads to calm interactions with others*

Opposite: *Aggressiveness*

The ultimate in Christ-likeness is to be able to receive “a blow” without fighting back. Are we able to just receive a word from someone without responding with bluntness, distraction, defensiveness? Are we able to see what another person is saying with an inner calmness. That is gentleness. This does not mean that we are never are angry about righteous causes. Nor does it mean that we are above being hurt by words. A gentle person can still be firm, strong, and straightforward. Gentleness has everything to do with our reactions to others while monitoring what it’s doing to us inside—is there rage? Vindictiveness? A desire to hide?

One thing that Christians have a very hard time believing is that God is gentle toward them. Because of our backgrounds and our guilt over sin, we often believe that God is barely holding back his rage against us. Certainly, God hates (and judges) sin. But his posture toward the world he created is one of loving gentleness.

Prayerfully read this morning’s Scripture passages and conclude with slowly praying John’s Stott’s daily prayer.

Read: Psalm 103:6-14; Matthew 11:25-30

Evening Prayer

Take a full minute of silence to become aware of God’s GENTLE care for you

Briefly review your day. Think about your day from start to finish. Remember anything that seems significant however big or small.

1. Thank God for every good gift.
2. Offer any questions, concerns, or burdens to him.
3. Repent of any sin

Reflect: Where did you see a lack of Gentleness toward others today?

Day 10 —Ask for Self-Control

Morning Reading

Egkrateia (Self-control). *Not impulsive but temperate with desires*

Opposite: *Indulgence*

The fact that Paul closes the list with self-control is a beautiful and necessary bookend to this passage in Galatians. If you remember, Paul starts out with a list of the desires of the flesh. "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry..." etc. Paul's argument: We displace these desires by cultivating the Spirit in our lives and enjoying it's fruit. So if we "walk by the Spirit" we will not "gratify the desires of the flesh." After cultivating these other fruits, Paul ends by saying: Remember keep the flesh in check (Have self-control!)

Self-Control is the ability to say "No" to desires that are contrary to God. If we have the Spirit in us, we should see an increase in our ability to walk away from sin. Just like the other fruits mentioned, we will absolutely not do this perfectly. However, a Christian must come to the place where he or she is able to walk away from a desire that is not God's plan for us. We "crucify" the flesh with it's desires (Gal. 5:24). We consider ourselves dead to sin (Rom 6:11). The only way we "walk away" is if we are continuing to "walk in" the Spirit.

Prayerfully read this morning's Scripture passages and conclude with slowly praying John's Stott's daily prayer.

Read: Gen. 39:1-12; James 3:3-10; Titus 2:1-8

Evening Prayer

Take a full minute of silence to become aware of God's CONTROL in every single thing.

Briefly review your day. Think about your day from start to finish. Remember anything that seems significant however big or small.

1. Thank God for every good gift.
2. Offer any questions, concerns, or burdens to him.
3. Repent of any sin

Reflect: What did you desire today? Which desires were of "the flesh" and which were "Of the Spirit"—Gently offer these to God in prayer.

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