

# FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

## The Fruit of the Spirit - Galatians 5 Small Group Discussion Questions

1. What do you find most exciting about the Fruit of the Spirit?
2. How has the Fruit of the Spirit in other people shown you more about God?

### **Read Galatians 5:22-26**

3. How are the fruit of the Spirit more than mere niceties? Do you think that they are radically counter-cultural in their true form?
4. Have you ever reflected on the nature of Christian freedom? What do you find most amazing about it? How extensive is it?
5. Do you find it exciting or empowering to know that God's gift of the Holy Spirit is like a seed planted in you?
6. How would you describe each of the fruit of the Spirit listed here? Do you think that this list is meant to be exhaustive? Why or why not?
7. Why is it important to distinguish between fruit being the evidence of our relationship with God rather than the means of salvation?
8. What fruit do you most recognise in yourself? Which fruit do you have most trouble submitting to the will of the Holy Spirit? What would others say?
9. Do you think that the Fruit of the Spirit usually shows gradually? Have you seen evidence of this in your life or someone else's life?
10. What is the significance of 'fruit' being singular (rather than plural)? Is it possible to show evidence of one fruit but absent in another?
11. How can we submit more to the will of the Holy Spirit living in us?
12. What are the habits that can help cultivate fruit flourishing?
13. What would it look like in your life to more readily 'walk' or 'keep in step' with the Spirit?
14. How can you this week be more open to sharing the Fruit of the Spirit in the key contexts of your influence? (Be sure to spend some time praying about this.) (*If you thought about this on camp - how are you going? How can the group be praying for you?*)
15. How is Christians living 'fruitfully' a declaration of God's kingdom to the world?

## Talk 3/3 (Fruit of the Spirit): Church Camp

“FRUIT and the Spirit”

by the Rev'd Adam Lowe

*Bible Passage: Galatians 5:22-26*

### INTRODUCTION \ \ FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

This weekend at the ‘all church camp’, the adults and the kids have been spending time looking at this amazing chapter from Galatians, chapter 5, sometimes referred to as the “charter for Christian freedom”.

- As you move through it’s so clear that every person who is a Christian, *every person who is a passionate follower of Jesus*, has been given an incredible freedom in Jesus Christ.
- There’s at least two dimensions of that freedom: A freedom **FROM**, and a freedom **FOR**.
- If you’re a passionate follower of Jesus, you have: a freedom *from* sin and death; from the Law, but you also have a freedom *for* the power of the resurrection to be unleashed in your life: **The seed of the Holy Spirit has been planted in you!**
- Yet, when it comes to the fruit of the Spirit, we often think, ‘how nice’, ‘how lovely and quaint’, but actually it’s so much more than that.
- The fruit of the Spirit, is the power of God, the power of the resurrection, is bursting forth in you and into the world.

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I heard a story about a man who was out working in a field. While he was there, an evangelist walked up to him and said, “are you a Christian?”. Pondering for a moment, the farmer said, “do you have a pen and paper”. The evangelist handed over a notepad and pen, only for the farmer to sit down and write a long list of names. Once he was finished writing the list, he handed it to the evangelist and said, “go ask these people”.

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Jesus said: This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples (John 15:8)

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As children of God, there should be some family resemblance.

- I showed a photo last week, of Amelia and myself at the same age - the family resemblance was self evident.
- *The same should be with God.*
- Being a Christian is more than just a veneer - more than just a thin layer on top. Following Jesus is not just about turning over a new leaf, **but beginning a whole new life. //**

At the time Paul was writing to the Galatians, other people were coming in and teaching all sorts of false things.

3

- They were saying, you’re not saved unless you do X, Y, Z;  
They were saying, that you had to earn your salvation.
- But Paul says “no, no” - we’re saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone, and the fruit that we show *is the outward expression of the change happening within.*
- **The fruit isn’t the means by which you are saved, it’s evidence that we have been saved.**
- *So why do we yearn to live changed lives?*  
Out of our great love for God;  
And in a great anticipation of what we are becoming.
- If you don’t believe in God, you don’t know where you will be in a billion years, but if you follow Jesus, you absolutely do!
- And how we live now, points to that future.
- *So how then does the Fruit of the Spirit grow in us?*
- **Gradually;**  
**Symmetrically;** and  
**In Step with the Spirit;**

4

## A \ GRADUALLY \ VERSES 22-23

So first, the fruit of the spirit grows **gradually**.

It's quite amazing that out of all of the potential metaphors Paul could have used to describe the life of Christian transformation, he used a botanical one!

- Not traits, or characteristics, but fruit!
- That means, that more often than not, our growth is gradual.
- There certainly can be spurts of growth, but so often it is a slow almost invisible process.

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But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

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Whenever I read or hear this list, so often my default thought is: how nice!

- If only I would wake up one morning, after I prayed really earnestly the night before, concentrated with all my might,

5

having willed these things into existence,  
and I would be miraculously transformed  
into someone who oozes the fruit of the Spirit.

- So often when we meet people who ooze the fruit of the Spirit, we think, 'wow, how amazing', I wish I was **born** that way or **instantly** changed.
- We live in a culture in which everything is instant. Everything is fast. Things flitter from one moment to the next.  
*When do we want it? **Yesterday!***  
*How much effort do we want to invest? **Minimal!***
- But the reality of the fruit of the Spirit, just like the fruit forming on a tree, it's gradual, it takes time - we're all 'works in progress'.
- It's so counter-cultural but it's such great news, because we live in a fast culture with shallow roots, when God wants to go deep and effect change that lasts. //

That means that sometimes it's really difficult to notice when you're growing.

- Just think of children growing... We usually don't say "Amelia is getting bigger right before my eyes", we're more likely to comment "I think Amelia is getting bigger".

6

- Why 'think'? Because we can't see her grow...  
You can't sit them down and watch,  
it's not until they've been measured *or tested* that you really know.
- That happens with us too with growth as Christians.
- Sometimes we can think we're not growing at all until we're tested.  
Something can happen in our life, maybe something stressful,  
and then we notice, 'oh wow, I didn't react like I would have a year ago'.
- **That's the gradual work of the Spirit bearing fruit in you.**  
Growth is happening, but it can be difficult to see.

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I remember hearing a story about an acorn that had fell to the ground near a grave with a giant marble slab. The seed, the acorn was tiny, but over time, as the tree grew, it shifted that sheet of marble and eventually snapped it in half!

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- And we don't have just a seed - we have the seed of the Holy Spirit in us!
- If a seed can crack a giant sheet of marble,  
imagine what the power of God can do working in us!
- *Christian growth is the process by which the seed of the Holy Spirit takes root in your life... gradually.*

7

## B \ SYMMETRICALLY \ FRUIT IS INTERDEPENDENT

Growth is gradual, but growth also happens symmetrically.

- I'll come back to what that means in a moment, but we need to look at the fruit first.
- It's important to note that there's actually three sets of virtues mentioned...
- **Love, joy, and peace...**  
The primary concern here is with our attitude towards God.  
*That our first love is for God,  
that our chief joy is in God, and  
that our deepest peace is with God.*
- **Then there's forbearance or patience, kindness, goodness,**  
These are social virtues, that are primarily directed towards other people.  
*Patience with regards to long-suffering towards those who aggravate or persecute you.  
Kindness in our disposition towards others, and  
Goodness in both our words and deeds.*
- **And then finally faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.**  
*Faithfulness is with regards to the reliability of our faith, and  
Gentleness is a humility and meekness like that of Christ -  
Both are aspects of self-control. //*

8

We must grow symmetrically in the fruit, because:

- You can't just have one of the fruit growing completely independently.
- You can't have lop-sided fruit.
- Sometimes when we hear the fruit of the Spirit read out, **we want to cherry pick.**
- Patience sounds really nice, I wouldn't mind a bit of joy as well, but I'm really happy to leave self-control to someone else.
- *Note that Paul doesn't say **fruitS** of the Spirit, he says - singular - **FRUIT** of the Spirit.*
- Jonathan Edwards, well-known American theologian said the fruit all go together.
- In one of his books, he said [with the fruit of the Spirit], "there is a concatenation of the graces of Christianity".
- Concatenation - very fancy word probably don't use that that very much - but Edwards meant that the fruit are deeply interdependent.
- Just think for a moment you can't really be loving without being kind.
- *If you are being loving but not kind, actually it's just counterfeit, it's a fake, love.*
- You can't really be gentle and not be self-controlled.
- *Otherwise it's a counterfeit gentleness.*

9

- You can't be peaceful and not faithful,  
You can't be kind and not good,  
You can't be faithful and not patient.
- The fruit - singular - of the Spirit go together.
- Do you see the deep sort of change that God desires?

In 1 Corinthians 13, that famous passage that is often used at weddings, Paul goes through all these amazing things that people are doing.

- You can teach, prophesy, speak in tongues - wow so much.
- But actually without faith, hope, and love, you're actually nothing.
- You might be active in the church, using your gifts, but you're not growing in the gifts of the Holy Spirit yourself.
- You can be really busy, but not actually growing.
- God wants so much more than that for us.

Think about all of the fruit - all the various aspects...

*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self.*

10

- Pick out one that you think you can really see progress with in your life. Great - thank God for he's cultivating in you and celebrate it.
- But now I want you to really pick out one that you're struggling with. If you're brave enough, maybe there's someone who you trust, you can ask where do you think are my quirks that bring some of the fruit unstuck.
- Whatever that one is, that's the place to start. That's the place to pray about, and ask God to help you. Pick out one that you're struggling with, pray about it, cultivate it.

A helpful way to have that fruit released, *is to contemplate the nature of it...*

- Think about what the opposite of each fruit is; and then consider how God demonstrates it.
- **Think about patience.** The opposite of patience is impetuous, it's actually a form of self-reliance and selfishness, not wanting to wait on external factors or God, but doing things according to your own timetable. How does God demonstrate patience? Patience comes from looking at the wisdom of God and then thinking about: *do you know how patient God has been with you? //*
- There's a good fight going on in every believer, God is calling for deep change.
- He's calling us to walk, to keep in step with the Spirit.

11

## C \ IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT \ OUR ROLE

Keeping in step with the Spirit is not because of dogged determination.

We are simply letting the seed take root - we don't have to create this, it's already there!

- Here's the amazing news - God has already given you that fruit, that's a gift, you've just got to work with God to let it grow.
- *We have resources for change that are unequal and unsurpassed to anything in the universe.*
- We've just to grow into it.

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When we were growing up, mum would always buy us shoes that were too big for our feet. We just had to grow into them.

- It's like that with the Spirit too, we grow into the gifts that the Spirit has given.
- Eugene Peterson says...

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But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard... (Galatians 5:22a)

- God has brought his gifts into our lives, we just need to stay in step with him.

12

- Sometimes when you're given a gift, it takes you a while to figure out how to incorporate it into your daily life - especially if it changes existing habits!
- We can have the gift, but we just don't know how or when to use it. Sometimes we just don't remember that the gift is even there!
- **It often happens in small ways.**

Tom Wright in his book on virtues says:

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Virtue, in this strict sense, is what happens when someone has made a thousand small choices, requiring effort and concentration, to do something which is good and right but which doesn't "come naturally" - and then, on the thousand and first time, when it really matters, they find that they do what's required "automatically", as we say. (p. 8-9)

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- Or as Paul says here in verse 25, we've got to keep in step with the Spirit.
- The verb here literally means to people being "drawn up in line", which means to walk in line with someone or something else.
- For Christians, that means, walking in the way of the Spirit.
- The Spirit leads us, and we just need to follow.
- That means on a practical level saying **no** to somethings, **yes** to other things. //

13

- Every time you're face with another person, or in your heart towards God, we have the opportunity to walk in the way that the Spirit leads, or walk according to how our flesh desires.
- Sometimes that can be really hard to discern, but my hunch in the 99% cases it's actually pretty easy to figure out, and if we have trouble, then we can ask for help.
- This is not passive. //

There's tools of the Christian life that help with that of course....

- *The gardener creates the conditions through which the power of the seed flourishes.*
- I remember when flying into Townsville once it had been dry for sometime. The land was barren and dry, yet weaving its way through the plain was a windy green belt. It looked narrow, yet it was fairly dense. What was it, there was a creek flowing and thick vegetation along the banks.
- How can we nourish the Fruit of the Spirit?  
Bible, prayer, fellowship, obedience, and how we handle and learn from suffering...
- But let me tell you, if you really want the Fruit of the Spirit to flourish in you, do it in response to God's love for you, and as an expression of your love for God.

14



- The optimal environment for a fish to flourish is water,  
The optimal environment for a glider to flourish is air,  
The optimal environment for the Fruit of the Spirit to flourish is love.
- We have a freedom FOR something.  
We have a freedom FOR love with God,  
We have a freedom FOR declaring God's love to others.
- Fruit is meant to be outwardly expressed! To God and to those around us.

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13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. 14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself"

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- If fruit sits on the tree, it will eventually just fall to the ground and rot.
- If you want the fruit to flourish, use it in response to God's love for you.

15

## CONCLUSION \\ SEED, WEEDS, AND FRUIT

If you love Jesus, he has set you free.

- You don't have to earn it, he's done it.
- But things don't stop there, because God's planted an incredible seed in you: the seed of the Holy Spirit, and God wants life to burst open in you.
- He's already given us great gifts of life:  
*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self.*
- And this week he'll give us great opportunities for us to use them.
- The only question is, will we?

16