

Character that Counts

Studies on the Fruit of the Spirit

A Creative Living International Publication

Sponsored by the ministry of:

Foreword

Welcome to this life-enriching seminar for men and women who already know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and others who may be seeking Him.

The seminar is sponsored and led by:

This material is provided through the kind generosity of Creative Living International, a Christian organization designed to help individuals find practical biblical principles for today's living.

This booklet
belongs to: _____

Seminar
Leaders: _____

Character that Counts

Studies on the Fruit of the Spirit

Lesson		Page
1	Love	5
2	Joy	17
2	Peace	27
4	Patience	36
5	Kindness	45
6	Goodness	53
7	Faithfulness	61
8	Gentleness	70
9	Self-Control	79
10	Character that Counts	87

Character that Counts

Studies on the Fruit of the Spirit

Few pieces of literature have been quoted as much as Galatians 5:22-23: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” We love the sound of these words because they include the most beautiful of human virtues--virtues we want to give and receive.

These verses also describe God’s character as revealed in Scripture and fully demonstrated in the life of His Son Jesus Christ, “the exact representation of His being” (Hebrews 1:3). Furthermore, Scripture tells us that God created us in His own image to reflect His character (Genesis 1:26). Therefore, our fulfillment in life comes as we succeed or fail at being like Him and reflecting His character in the world around us.

While we see people practicing many good deeds, the sad truth is that most people struggle to consistently exude the love, joy, peace and patience which they would like to exhibit in their lives. In our own strength, most of us are pulled toward selfish ways and often fail at being who we want to be and who God wants us to be.

But the good news is that God promises to produce these qualities in us as we continually choose to yield our lives to Him. As fruit is the natural output of the fruit tree, the fruit of God’s Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23 is the natural outcome of walking with God and choosing to make Him Lord of our daily lives.

The purpose of this study is to help us experience more fully the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control God wants to produce in us as we trust Him with the details of our lives. Each lesson will cover the biblical definition of one of these virtues, how God develops it in our lives, and its rewards.

The fruit of the Spirit is . . .

Lesson 1

Love

No one would question the song lyrics that state “what the world needs now is love.” Countless human problems would be solved by following the biblical mandate to love your neighbor as yourself. But this unselfish type of love is easier said than done.

The word for love used to describe this fruit of the Spirit in a believer’s life was not a common Greek word for love in Paul’s day. At that time, two Greek words described love. They were *eros*, a passionate, usually sexual love, and *phileo*, tender affection, or friendship love.

But the New Testament used a different Greek word to describe the love of God for us and the love God’s Spirit produces in the Christian. The word for this love is *agape*. It is a love that selflessly acts on behalf of the highest interest of the one loved. Agape love does not depend on feelings, natural human affinity, or worthiness of the one loved. In fact, the agape love which the Holy Spirit produces in us often works with or without natural motivations for love. Agape love often acts contrary to our feelings and has nothing to do with the worthiness of the loved one.

Because such love is the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit, it is to be the identifying characteristic of the Christian. As one song declares, “They will know we are Christians by our love.”

We will begin our study on *Character that Counts* with a look at the agape love that God produces in us as we yield our lives to Him.

1.a. How is the word *love* used in the world around us?

b. How would you describe the love most needed in the world today?

c. What is caused by the absence of love in individuals, families, our society and the world in general?

2.a. What do these Scriptures state about the nature of God?

Psalm 86:15

1 John 4:8b

b. How do the following verses describe God's love for us and the love He gives us for others?

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

1 Corinthians 13:4

1 Corinthians 13:5

1 Corinthians 13:6

1 Corinthians 13:7-8a

c. What positive effects does loving this way have on the people around us?

3. To love with God's unconditional love, we must first experience His love. What do the following tell us about God's unconditional love for us?
Romans 8:38-39

John 3:16

Romans 5:8

Reference: Note 1, “Why did Christ have to die...?”, p. 14.

4. According to the following, what is the result of comprehending God's love for us?

1 John 4:19

Ephesians 3:17b-19

5. According to these verses, what does love for God bring about in our lives?

John 14:21, 23

6.a. Review Question #2.b. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a). According to the Scriptures, we cannot love with agape love unless God enables us. How does God produce His love in our lives according to these verses?

John 15:4-5

Ephesians 5:18b

Note: The analogy in Ephesians 5:18 is that being filled, or controlled, by the Holy Spirit is like being controlled by alcohol—it affects everything we do.

Reference: Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, p. 15, and Note 2, *Holy Spirit works*, p. 96.

b. According to Romans 5:3-5, what does the Holy Spirit use to develop God's love in us?

c. Optional: Why do you think suffering builds our capacity to love with God's love?

7. Agape love toward others is not based on feelings, affinity or worthiness of the one loved. Rather, it is unselfish action on behalf of the highest interest of the one loved, including the unlovely person and even enemies. How is this love described in the following?
Luke 6:35 (Romans 12:21)

Note: Verses in parentheses () are supportive of the given verse and are optional.

Romans 12:14, 17a, 19

Colossians 3:12-13

8. What other qualities of agape love does the Spirit produce in us as we yield ourselves to His gracious control?

Romans 12:9-10

Romans 12:13

Romans 12:16

Romans 12:18

Ephesians 4:29

Philippians 4:8

9.a. How can self-will, self-righteousness, self-effort or self-focus prevent us from loving with God's love?

Optional: Give an example from everyday life.

b. How do the results in a given situation change when we respond with loving actions rather than selfish ones?

Optional: Give an example from everyday life.

10. What motivation does God produce in the Christian committed to His will? 1 Corinthians 16:14

Summary

11.a. How would you describe God's agape love that is a fruit of the Spirit? (Review #2 above.)

b. Why must we realize God's love for us before we can love with agape love?

12.a. Are there individuals in your life that you would especially like to love with God's agape love? Take a moment to ask God to help you love them in His power.

b. What aspects of His love as seen in this lesson (#2b, 7, 8) do you especially want God to produce in your toward these individuals?

c. What is His promise when you pray for this love?

1 John 5:14-15

13. What part does abiding in Christ and being controlled by the Holy Spirit have in loving with God's unconditional love?

14.a. Experiencing God's love begins with inviting Christ into our lives. He does not force His way into our lives, but waits to be invited. What do the following verses promise?

John 1:12 (speaking of Jesus Christ)

Revelation 3:20 (Christ speaking)

b. Have you ever invited Christ to come into your life? Perhaps the following prayer expresses the desire of your heart.

Lord Jesus, I want to know you and experience your love personally. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank you for forgiving my sins. Please fill me with your Spirit and with your love for others.

If you pray this prayer, you can be assured that Christ will keep His promise to come into your life and produce His love in you for others.

LESSON 1 NOTES

1 "Why did Christ have to die in my place?" This is one of the most important yet least understood questions of the Christian faith. The following explanations of various biblical terms answer this question:

a. Propitiation is a biblical word meaning "satisfaction" and refers to the righteous demands of God being satisfied. God will not compromise His attributes of righteousness and justice, and He is therefore legitimately outraged by man's deliberate violation of His will. But God's attribute of love motivated Him to provide a way to bring man back into fellowship with Himself *without compromising* His attributes of absolute righteousness and justice. God's holy character demanded that man's sin be paid for.

Therefore, God came into the world in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Because Christ was born without sin and never committed an act of sin, He alone was qualified to bear the holy wrath of God due the human race as He willingly died on the cross for our sin. In so doing He "satisfied" the just demands of God's holy character against man's sin. This act set God's love free to pour out grace on those who receive His gift of salvation. In this way, God is "just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26). See explanation in *d. Justification* below.

b. Redemption is a biblical word meaning "to buy out" or "to set free by the payment of a price (ransom)" and refers to a slave being purchased out of slavery. Romans 3:24 says we are "justified freely by his grace through the *redemption* that came by Christ Jesus." As born sinners, we are in the slave market of sin, so to speak. But Christ, the only free man who ever lived (because He was sinless), paid the ransom price of His own blood to purchase sinners out of the slave market of sin and set them free to become sons of God. Only by the price of death can one be set free (Romans 6:23), and only one who is free (sinless as Christ was; cf. Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21) can buy a slave's freedom. By paying the ransom price of His shed blood, Jesus purchased the person who puts faith in Him out of the slave market of sin and sets him free to become a son of God (Gal. 3:13; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Gal 4:4-5).

c. Reconciliation means "to change a person from enmity to friendship." The Bible says that man is born at enmity with God. Sin erects a barrier between man and God because of a sense of guilt in man. This guilt puts him at odds with God. Reconciliation is the aspect of Christ's death on the cross which removed the barrier of man's sin and its consequences and thus took away guilt which caused enmity against God. Christ's death on the cross removed every barrier between a holy God and sinful man. Reconciliation is available to all men, no matter how sinful. While reconciliation is available and sufficient for everyone, only those who accept the gift of this reconciliation personally by faith receive it.

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). "When we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10).

d. Justification refers to God declaring us "not guilty" and righteous in his sight, even though we are guilty of sin. God is able to do this because of the life and death of Jesus Christ acting as man's substitute. When God declares a person righteous in His sight, He does so on the basis of the life and death of the One who was acting on his behalf. "Jesus our Lord...was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Romans 4:24-25). When we put faith in Jesus Christ to save us from sin, God declares us justified, or not guilty, and righteous. We are justified by the death of Christ which paid the penalty for our sin, and we are justified by the life of Christ whose life of righteousness is also credited to us. This justification, which is all by God's grace and received by faith, brings us into fellowship with God as a child in His family.

2 The Holy Spirit. God has made Himself known in the Bible as a Trinity; three divine persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), all with the same essence of deity. The Holy Spirit, known as the Third Person of the Trinity, indwells every person who personally receives Christ (John 1:12; 14:16-17; Romans 8:9). The Scriptures reveal the Holy Spirit not as an "it," but rather as a "He," a distinct personality. In John 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus that the Holy Spirit is the member of the Trinity who brings

about regeneration or spiritual birth in the believer. While the Holy Spirit cannot be seen, we can see the evidence of His work (3:8). The Scriptures further tell us that when we ask God (Luke 11:13) to "fill" us with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18b), He responds by supernaturally instructing and empowering us to live the Christian life (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 3:16-20; Ezekiel 36:26-27). Sometimes the Bible refers to this as "Christ in you" (Colossians 1:27b). See also 2, *Works of the Holy Spirit*, p. 96.

The fruit of the Spirit is . . .

Lesson 2

Joy

We all long to experience joy in our lives. This delightful human emotion can come from families, our vocations, an abundance of food, good health, financial security, a victory.

But the lasting joy the Holy Spirit gives us goes beyond human feelings of delight and pleasure. This joy abides deep in our hearts and is not necessarily related to our circumstances. It is an inner well of strength as seen in the early Christians as they endured suffering and persecution. Their joy was rooted in knowing the love and faithfulness of God, who promises to work everything in the believer's life for good (Romans 8:28) and to give eternal life with Him in a new heaven and earth (1 Corinthians 2:9; 1 John 5:11; Revelation 21:1-4). It is a joy found in loving God and others.

But more than this, it is a joy based on a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. As the angel announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds, he declared, "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ, the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

We now know the angel spoke of the great freedom from the penalty and power of sin that the believer would find through faith in Christ. Simple faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ brings a joyful release from guilt and a new ability to walk in obedience to God. This is the joy described by the songwriter Isaac Watts when he penned:

*At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light
And the burden of my heart rolled away--*

*It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day.*

The Scriptures have much to say about this indestructible joy that the Holy Spirit gives us. As we continue our study of *Character that Counts*, we will look at the development and rewards of the fruit of the Spirit...*Joy*.

1.a. How would you describe joy?

b. The Bible tells us that we need joy in our lives. Why is joy important according to Proverbs 17:22?

2.a. What are some natural sources of joy in life?

b. While these are meant by God for our pleasure (1 Timothy 6:17c; James 1:17a), why do they ultimately fall short in meeting our need for joy?

3.a. Where does the secular world encourage people to look for joy?

b. What are some results of seeking joy in these places?

c. What did King Solomon find?

Ecclesiastes 2:4-11

Reference: Note 1, *Seeking joy in the wrong places*, p. 25.

4. What is God's desire for us, as reflected in the following verses?

Nehemiah 8:10 (8:5, 9,12)

Note: Verses in parentheses () are supportive of the given verse and optional.

Psalm 68:3

John 15:11 (Jesus speaking)

5. Jesus spoke of His desire for us to experience His "complete joy" (John 15:11). With what does Jesus associate this joy in the following verses?

John 15:5,16

John 15:10-12

John 16:24

6. The joy God can give us during difficult times has been described as an inner well of strength. What is the admonition of Hebrews 12:2-3 for walking faithfully with the Lord through these times?

Note: The joy set before Jesus was the eternal salvation His suffering would provide those who would believe in Him.

7. According to the Bible, God uses the difficulties and hardships we encounter in life to build more joy into our lives, especially when they come as a result of following Him. What is the promise of the following regarding hardship?

Psalms 126:5-6

Isaiah 12:2-3 (Romans 8:37-39)

James 1:2-4 (Romans 5:3-5)

8.a. Praise and thankfulness toward God can produce joy in our lives. The Psalms are full of reasons to take heart and praise the Lord. What are we admonished to do in Psalm 33:1,3, and 21?

b. List some reasons the psalmist gives for praising God and being joyful.

Psalm 33:4-5

Psalm 33:20

Psalm 89:14-16

Psalm 100:1-3, 5

c. What reasons for praise and joy do these verses highlight?

Psalm 16:11

Psalm 30:4-5

Psalm 63:3, 7-8

9.a. Writing from a prison cell, Paul instructs his readers, “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4). What are reasons for joy we have as believers in Christ?

Colossians 1:21-22, 13

Colossians 1:27b

Optional: Colossians 2:9-10

Reference: Note 2, *fullness in Christ*, p. 26.

Romans 6:22-23

b. What other causes for joy does Paul mention in the following?

Romans 8:1

Romans 8:28

Romans 8:31-32

10. What brings God joy according to the following?

Luke 15:1-7

Optional: Luke 15:11-24

Psalm 147:11

Note: *fear of the Lord* is reverential trust.

Zephaniah 3:17

Summary

11. Why is joy important in your life? What are the rewards of being a joyful person?

12. What natural joys have you experienced in your life? What supernatural joy? What differences do you see?

13.a. What thieves seek to rob us of the joy God has for us?

b. What perspectives and practices can help you continually experience joy in Christ?

14. According to our study, where is indestructible joy found, even during hard times?

15. We saw that God wants us to experience complete joy. If your life is not joyful, perhaps you would like to take a moment and ask Him to work in your life to give you an abundance of joy through the power of His Spirit.

LESSON 2 NOTES

1 *Seeking joy in wrong places.* “Before God made man upon the earth He first prepared for him a world of useful and pleasant things for his sustenance and delight. In the Genesis account of the creation these are called simply ‘things.’ They were made for man’s use, but they were meant always to be external to the man and subservient to him. In the deep heart of the man was a shrine where none but God was worthy to come. Within him was God; without, a thousand gifts which God had showered upon him...Our woes began when God was forced out of His central shrine and things were allowed to enter. Within the human heart, things have taken over. Men have now by nature no peace within their hearts, for God is crowned there no longer, but there in the moral dusk stubborn and aggressive usurpers fight among themselves for the first place on the throne....God’s gifts now take the place of God, and the whole course of

nature is upset by the monstrous substitution.” A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, pp. 21-22.

2 *fullness in Christ* (Col. 2:10). In Colossians 2:10-15, “Paul declares that the Christian is complete in Christ....This completeness includes the putting off of the sinful nature (vs. 11), resurrection from spiritual death (vv. 12-13), forgiveness (v. 13) and deliverance from legalistic requirements (v. 14) and from evil spirit beings (v. 15).” *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1815.

Lesson 3

Peace

The word “peace” in the Bible refers to *wholeness and a sense of well-being in all areas of life*. Certainly we all yearn for this kind of peace. Not just because it feels better, but because a lack of peace drains our energy and adds stress to the already challenging circumstances we face.

People seek peace of mind in different ways. Some look for a sense of wholeness and well-being by trying to “get to the top” professionally, acquire financial security, obtain certain possessions, or go on exotic vacations. Others seek peace by striving to somehow get in control of things or by trying to change themselves or others. Still others seek peace through being religious or promoting certain philosophies.

But sooner or later, there comes a realization that these avenues do not lead to lasting peace. Life is constantly changing and giving us a renewed sense that we are not in control. Power and possessions cannot provide the security we need. Relationships are imperfect, and, no matter how hard we may try, we can never be perfect ourselves. The peace we need—a lasting sense of wholeness and well-being in all areas of life—at last may seem unattainable.

But God, who created us to experience peace, can also give us peace. What’s more, the sense of wholeness and well-being in all areas of life that He gives is not diminished by change, life’s uncertainties, or the imperfections we face in ourselves and others. It is a supernatural peace that comes from trusting God and His Word and letting His Spirit control our lives.

In this lesson, we will look at what the Bible says about this “peace of God that transcends all understanding” (Philippians 4:7).

1.a. How would you describe the peace we need?

b. What are some causes of a lack of peace?

c. What can a lack of peace cause in individuals and society?

2.a. What does 1 Corinthians 14:33a tell us about the character of God?

b. How can we get the peace and order of God in our lives according to the following?

Psalm 29:11

Psalm 119:165

Isaiah 26:3

c. What does Jesus promise in John 14:27? (Read in Living Bible translation if possible.)

3. What are benefits of the peace God gives?

Psalm 4:8

Proverbs 14:30a

Philippians 4:7

4.a. The peace of God comes from first being at peace with God. The Bible tells us that since the Garden of Eden, sin has brought death to man, or spiritual separation from a holy God (cf. Genesis 3; Romans 6:23a). But God made a way for our relationship to Him to be restored. What did God do in order for us to have peace with Him again?

Colossians 1:19-20 (speaking of Jesus)

Isaiah 53:5 (1 Peter 2:24)

Note: Verses in parentheses () are supportive of the given verse and optional.

Reference: Note 1, “Why did Christ have to die...,” p. 14.

b. What allows us to once again experience peace with God?
Romans 3:22-24

Romans 5:1

5. These Scriptures tell us that when we put our faith in Jesus Christ, God puts His Holy Spirit in us to empower us to live for Him (Romans 8:9). What do these verses tell us about the change that takes place when we receive Christ and His Spirit?

Ezekiel 36:26-27

6. Ephesians 5:18 commands us to “be filled” with the Spirit. This means to continually choose to allow the Holy Spirit to control our thoughts and actions. What phrase in Romans 8:6b describes the result?

7.a. Sin destroys peace, and when we lack peace, sin is often present. How did the psalmist ask for God's help in identifying sin in his life?

Psalm 139:23-24

b. When we have sinned, how can we restore peace with God and once again be controlled by the Holy Spirit?

1 John 1:9

Note: Confession involves agreeing with God about our sin and asking Him to help us change. It might be said that to confess sin means to: "Call it sin, call it forgiven (on the cross), and call on God to change us."

8. The following are some common peace destroyers:

a. **Lack of forgiveness.** In order to maintain peace in our lives, what will God's Spirit lead us *and* enable us to do in relationship to other people?

Romans 12:17a, 18-19

Colossians 3:13

b. **Worldly care** can destroy our peace. What did Jesus say about this in Matthew 6:31-34?

c. **Fear and doubt** destroy our peace as believers. Read Matt 14:25-32. What does this passage encourage us to do and not to do in order to maintain peace in the face of fear and doubt?

d. **Impatience with ourselves** can destroy our peace. What will the Spirit lead us to do?

Philippians 4:8

Philippians 3:12, 13b-14

Hebrews 12:2a

Reference: Note 1, “be patient with yourself....” p. 35.

e. **Sometimes we lose peace because the Spirit is warning us** not to take a certain course of action. What does Colossians 3:15a instruct?

Note: The word *rule* here means to let umpire or call the shots. When we sincerely desire to do God’s will and lack peace about a certain direction, we should not move ahead.

9.a. What promises of God can bring peace in the difficulties of life?
Hebrews 13:5b

Jeremiah 29:11

Isaiah 41:10 (42:16; 43:2-3a)

b. What will the Spirit lead us to do rather than worry?
Isaiah 40:31 (40:29)

1 Peter 5:7

James 1:5

Philippians 4:6-7

Summary

10.a. Peace in the biblical sense is wholeness and a sense of well-being in every area of our lives. Where does this kind of peace begin (Questions 4 and 5)?

b. How can you keep God's peace in your life (Questions 6 and 7)?

11. As you look over the "peace-destroyers" in Questions 7 and 8 above, is there one or more that you are battling right now?

12. What biblical instructions and promises from this lesson help you face the peace destroyers in your life today?

Heavenly Father, Thank you for allowing your own Son to die on the cross that I might have peace with you and experience supernatural peace in my life. Fill me continually with your gracious Holy Spirit that I might find the wholeness and sense of well-being that only you can give in the difficulties of life. Enable me to bring your peace to the world around me in Jesus' Name.

LESSON 3 NOTES

1 *be patient with yourself...*”Do, I entreat you, drive away all these anxious thoughts which hinder your soul, and try to serve God cheerfully. Be resolute in overcoming self, and in bearing with your mental troubles whatever they be, leaving all to God, and doing whatever you know to be His will, quickly and heartily; be gentle, patient, humble, and courteous to all, but especially be gentle and patient with yourself. I think that many of your troubles arise from an exaggerated anxiety, a secret impatience with your own faults; and this restlessness, when once it has got possession of your mind, is the cause of numberless trifling faults, which worry you, and go on adding to your burden until it becomes unbearable. I would have you honest in checking and correcting yourself, but at the same time patient under the consciousness of your frailty. Remember that Jesus our Lord loves to dwell within a quiet heart and to come to those who are at peace with themselves; restlessness and anxiety hinder our seeing Him, even when He is beside us and speaking to us.”

Pere Hyacinthe Besson (1816-1861)

Lesson 4

Patience

Impatience is among the greatest of our human struggles. All along the way, life demands patience from us. The child can't wait to be "big," the adolescent can't wait to be independent and self-sufficient, the adult can't wait for their personal or career dreams to materialize. Middle age brings the desire for freedom from the pressures of work, and later years require patience with physical limitations and future unknowns. All the seasons of life call for patience.

Life also requires patience on a daily basis. We all need self-restraint when provoked by others. Both child and adult need the ability not to retaliate with hostility or prompt punishment toward those who hurt, inconvenience or otherwise cross us. Emotional and relational success require the patience to respond in mercy instead of anger when people frustrate us.

And we need the patience, or longsuffering, to remain faithful in life's difficulties, trusting God even when we don't understand the way He is taking with us. Moreover, we need the patience to persevere when we are rejected or persecuted for our faith. We need the ability to keep on going when it would be easier to quit, and to maintain hope when we are being pulled toward despondency.

Patience may come easier for some than others, but the patience we all need must come from God's power in our lives. Patience grows as we trust God and find Him faithful through one challenge and then another. And growth in patience leads to perfected character, because patience requires growth in love, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control.

In this lesson on *Character that Counts*, we will look at how to draw on God's power for the patience and perseverance we need. We will also

discover how patience is a fundamental building block of wholeness in our lives.

1. What effects can a lack of patience have on a person: emotionally?

in relationship to others?

spiritually?

2.a. What happens when we respond patiently but push down negative feelings?

b. In light of this, what is true of the patience we need to live healthy and constructive lives?

c. What do the following verses add to this?
Ephesians 4:26

James 1:19

3.a. How is the patience of God described in Psalm 103:8-14?

b. What is involved in God's patience that must also be part of ours?

4.a. While our initial reaction toward someone who has irritated us may be anger or a desire to retaliate, what will the Spirit of God lead and enable us to do?

Ephesians 4:2

Ephesians 4:31-32

1 Peter 3:9-11

b. When we have reacted with anger or vengeance, what can we do to reconcile with the other person?

Mark 11:25

Matthew 5:23-24 (Romans 12:18)

Note: Verses in parenthesis are supportive and optional.

5.a. The Holy Spirit also enables us to remain faithful in the trials of life. Longsuffering, perseverance and endurance are biblical terms used to describe the patience God gives. How did Jesus Christ demonstrate this form of patience?

1 Peter 2:22-23

b. What are some examples of Christ's patience?

Matthew 26:42, 50-54, 62-68

Matthew 27:27-31

Luke 23:34, 46

6.a. What does this form of patience include for the believer?

Romans 12:12

Colossians 1:11

Hebrews 12:1-3

Reference: Note 1, *Running the race...*, p. 44.

b. What aspects of persevering faith are mentioned in these verses?

Psalm 27:14

Psalm 37:7-8

Habakkuk 3:17-19 (Proverbs 3:5-6a)

7.a. What is our natural human response when we are criticized or persecuted for our faith?

b. What supernatural response to opposition or persecution does the Holy Spirit produce in us?

1 Corinthians 15:58

1 Peter 3:15

1 Peter 4:19

8.a. What is God's promise when we stand firm through the tests of faith?
Galatians 6:9

1 Peter 5:6, 9b-10

James 1:12

Reference: Note 2, *The crown of life*, p. 44.

b. What does the development of patience also lead to in our lives?

Romans 5:3-4

James 1:4

Summary

9. What aspects of patience do you want the Holy Spirit to produce in you: in relationships with others?

in a difficult circumstance?

in facing opposition to your faith?

10. What choices allow the Spirit to build patience in us? (Review Questions 5 and 6.)

11. What are the benefits of working with God to build His patience in your life? (Review Questions 8.)

12.a. Is there a certain area in your life that is building patience in you right now?

b. What promises from this lesson apply to your situation?

LESSON 4 NOTES

1 *Running the race* (Hebrews 12:1) of the Christian life “involves hard work. It requires us to give up whatever endangers our relationship with God, to run patiently, and to struggle against sin with the power of the Holy Spirit. To live effectively, we must keep our eyes on Jesus. We will stumble if we look away from Him to stare at ourselves or at the circumstances surrounding us. We should be running for Christ, not ourselves, and we must always keep Him in sight.” *NIV Life Application Bible*, pg. 2239.

2 *The crown of life* (James 1:12) is like the victory wreath given to winning athletes (see 1 Corinthians 9:25). God’s crown of life is not glory and honor here on earth, but the reward of eternal life—living with God forever. The way to be in God’s winners’ circle is by loving him and staying faithful even under pressure.” *NIV Life Application Bible*, pg. 2245.

Lesson 5

Kindness

Kindness is God's goodness in action. When the Spirit produces kindness in our lives, we become the hands and feet and mouthpiece of God as we love needy people.

And everyone is needy. We all need people in our lives who are hospitable and friendly, accepting, considerate and helpful. We need people that we can count on for support when our burdens are too heavy to carry alone.

Historically, the world's manmade religions have had harsh and cruel gods that were temperamental and demanding and sometimes even required human sacrifice for appeasement. But the one true God, who has revealed Himself through the Bible, through the history of Israel, and in the person of Jesus Christ, is infinitely kind. He sustains our lives, gives us many things that we do not deserve, including salvation, and helps us in the crises that we face in life.

The Scriptures declare, "The Lord is loving toward all He has made" (Psalm 145:17). "The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble...." (Nahum 1:7). "He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). "The Lord is gracious; our God is full of compassion" (Psalm 116:5).

As God's children, we are to reflect our heavenly Father's kindness. This means being gracious in the way we treat our family members and friends and in the way we relate to our neighbors and those we meet each day. And it means being a part of what God is doing in our world to bring relief to the sick and needy, the frightened, and victims of injustice.

When the Holy Spirit produces God's kindness in us, we become humble servants who actively reflect His impartial love and compassion for

people. Our disposition toward others becomes like that of Jesus Christ--gentle, understanding and supportive. Through us, He is able to extend His mercy and hope to a hurting world.

As we continue our study of *Character that Counts*, we will look at what the Bible has to say about this wonderful fruit of the Spirit...kindness.

1.a. How would you describe a kind person?

b. Where do you see lack of kindness in the world around you?

c. What causes a lack of kindness in the world?

d. What are the results?

2. What dimensions of God's kindness are mentioned in these verses?

Psalm 68:5-6a

Isaiah 25:4

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

3. Jesus Christ reflected the kindness of God continually. Record the facets of God's kindness you observe in Christ's teachings and life in the following passages.

Matthew 9:35-36

Mark 1:40-42

Luke 4:18 (Jesus speaking)

Matthew 20:28 (John 13:5, 12-14)

Hebrews 4:15-16

Isaiah 53:4-5

4. Read the following passages and record the kindness you see in the lives of these biblical characters.

a. Joseph (who was sold into slavery by his brothers but later became their sole provider in Egypt).

Genesis 50:19-21

b. The Good Samaritan (viewed by Jews as an outcast, this man found a Jewish man who had been robbed and beaten).

Luke 10:30-37

5. What kindnesses are mentioned in the following verses:

a. With regard to other believers?

Romans 12:10 (1 Peter 3:8b; 4:8)

Romans 12:15

Romans 12:13

Galatians 6:2 (Acts 20:35)

b. With regard to the needy?

Proverbs 31:20

Isaiah 58:7

Matthew 25:34-40 (Jesus speaking)

Hebrews 13:3

c. Regarding generosity and its rewards?

Psalm 41:1

Proverbs 19:17

Proverbs 11:25; 22:9

Luke 6:38

d. Regarding enemies, the ultimate test of kindness?

Luke 6:35-36

6. What is true of the kind person's words and demeanor?

Proverbs 15:1a

Proverbs 15:30

Proverbs 16:24

Ecclesiastes 10:12a

7. Why do we need the Holy Spirit's power to demonstrate kindness?
What does kindness require that is not natural?

8. What phrases in the following verses describe how we are to carry out deeds of kindness?
John 15:4-5 (Jesus speaking)

Colossians 3:17

James 3:13c

Summary

9.a. What have you observed in this lesson about the kindness God wants to produce in your life?

b. In which of these areas do you want to grow?

10.a. What specific opportunities can allow you to give to the needs of others?

b. How can you carry out these deeds of kindness?

11. Why is kindness important in our witness for Christ?

Lesson 6

Goodness

While kindness is goodness expressing itself in deeds, goodness signifies a heart attitude that is morally upright. While kindness involves action, goodness is having a heart to be good, do good, and promote good. This inner goodness motivates right, noble and honorable words and deeds.

The Christian is to test and approve good (Romans 12:2), to cling to good (Romans 12:9), to do good (Romans 13:3), to follow after good (1 Thesalonians 5:15), to be enthusiastic for good (1 Peter 3:13), and to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). The Spirit-filled believer has an inner motivating desire to fulfill these mandates, and this is the fruit of goodness.

While kindness involves grace, gentleness and compassion, goodness does not always bring good to others by gentle means. Trench, a theologian following Jerome, believes that Jesus demonstrated the moral quality of goodness when he cleansed the temple in Matthew 21:12-13 and when He denounced the Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:13-29). Kindness, on the other hand, is seen in His gracious dealings with the penitent woman in Luke 7:37-50. In this sense, goodness is sometimes the sterner element in the ideal character.

Because God's creation thrives on good and is contaminated by evil, the spiritual Christian's goodness brings a preservative factor to his environment. Jesus called it being "salt and light" (Matthew 5:13-14).

In this lesson, we will look at the importance of being men and women of goodness in our world. We will observe how we can develop and maintain this important fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

1. How does goodness differ from kindness as a fruit of the Spirit?

2. How do the following describe the Lord's goodness?

Psalm 119:68a, 137

3.a. What phrases in these verses describe the heart attitude of goodness?

Acts 24:16

Romans 12:9, 21

Romans 12:16

b. Summarize the manifestations of goodness mentioned in the following verses.

Romans 13:8,10a

Romans 13:13

Titus 3:1-2 (3:8)

4.a. Our words have a great effect on us and those around us. According to Luke 6:45, how does a heart of goodness affect our words?

b. What is the desire of the Spirit-controlled believer?

Ephesians 4:29

5.a. Jesus commissioned us to be “salt” and “light” in the world, preservers and teachers of good. What does He say in Matthew 5:13-16?

Note: Salt is a preservative, and light symbolizes truth.

b. What does it mean to lose our “saltiness” or “hide our light under a bowl”?

6.a. Being “salt and light” sometimes requires that we stand for godly principles the world does not like. How do the following examples from Jesus’ life demonstrate this manifestation of goodness?

Luke 13:10-16

Matthew 23:1-7, 23-28

b. *Optional.* What can be expected in a society’s standards when people turn against God and godly principles?

Romans 1:29-32 (2 Timothy 3:2-4)

c. What *phrases* in the following verses tell us how to go about promoting good when that good is resisted by worldly standards?

Ephesians 4:15

Colossians 4:6

2 Timothy 2:24-25

7.a. Even though we want to do good, everyone struggles with the pull of our old sin nature. This battle between the “flesh” and the Spirit is described in Romans 7:21-23 and Galatians 5:17-18. How can we win this battle for good in our lives?
Galatians 5:16, 25

b. When we fall, how can we get back on track?
1 John 1:9

Ephesians 4:22-24 (Romans 13:14)

8. The Bible speaks to the reality of Satan and his forces of darkness. How can we win the battle for good against unseen powers of evil?
Ephesians 6:10-12 (14-18)

Reference: Note 1, *Satan*, p. 60.

9. The Holy Spirit uses the Scriptures to help us discern and resist evil and to nurture goodness in our lives. How must we view and handle God’s Word to grow in goodness?
Psalm 119:138

Psalm 119:105

Psalm 1:2-3

10. Fellowship with God and other believers helps us grow in goodness.
What do the following say about this?

Psalm 16:8

John 15:4-5

Hebrews 10:24-25

11. What will result from clinging to good in our lives?

Galatians 6:9

Psalm 51:10, 13

Proverbs 2:7-8

Proverbs 2:11

Isaiah 32:17

Summary

12. What will the fruit of goodness look like in your life from day to day?

13. How is goodness cultivated in your life?

14. What are the challenges to doing and promoting good?

15.a. In what area(s) of your life do you want to see the Spirit produce more goodness?

b. What choices can you make to grow in the goodness you desire? What is your prayer?

LESSON 6 NOTES

1 *Satan*, the devil. While the whole idea of Satan and evil adversaries called demons is incredible to some, it is important to understand what the Bible has to say about them. In the gospels there are numerous incidents cited where Jesus delivered people from demons. The Bible refers to Satan as an angelic being who led a heavenly revolt against God. Consequently, God cast him out of heaven with his rebelling host of angels (2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 12:7-9). Under Satan's leadership, these angelic beings became known as demons, and are very organized in their schemes and attacks on human beings (Ephesians 6:12). Satan and his forces work to get people to worship Satan (Luke 4:7) and to prevent individuals from turning to God (Luke 4:8). Satan's defeat is promised in Genesis 3:15 and was completed at the cross of Christ (Colossians 2:15). He is still a force to be reckoned with until Christ returns to judge the earth (Matthew 16:27). James 4:7 instructs believers to resist the devil (or demonic forces) by continually willing God's leadership in their lives.

Lesson 7

Faithfulness

One of the greatest evidences of the Holy Spirit's control in our lives is extraordinary faithfulness. This faithfulness is characterized by absolute trust in God and personal trustworthiness. This virtue grows as the Holy Spirit uses God's Word to continually assure us of God's faithfulness and to help us trust God with the details of life. Then He works in our character to make us trustworthy and reliable servants of God and others.

Jesus discussed the need for faith more than any other subject. "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matt. 17:20). All through the Scriptures we are encouraged to practice bold faith to discover the treasures of God's love and faithfulness.

Jesus also stressed the importance of integrity in our service to God (Matthew 25:21) and in our promises to others. "Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one" (Matthew 5:37).

Like the love and kindness aspects of the fruit of the Spirit, faithfulness makes us a shelter and source of hope to other people. The person who is full of genuine faith in God and trustworthiness of character draws people to him/her as the Lord Jesus did when He walked the earth. Faithfulness is the fruit of the Spirit that allows us to walk with God no matter what happens in life as well as be a beacon of light for others.

As we continue our study of *Character that Counts*, we will observe what the Bible has to say about the development and rewards of the fruit of the Spirit...faithfulness.

1. What characterizes faithfulness in the believer?

2.a. What results of people being unreliable and untrustworthy do you see in the world around you?

b. What has been accomplished by genuinely faithful people?

3.a. Faithfulness begins with trust in God's faithfulness. What do the following verses proclaim about God? (When possible, substitute the words *trustworthiness and reliability* for *faithfulness*.)

Psalm 9:10

Psalm 91:4

Lamentations 3:22-23 (Psalm 36:5; 86:15)

b. What do the following proclaim about the faithfulness of God's Word?
Psalm 119:160 (Psalm 19:7-11)

2 Timothy 3:16

4.a. What can tear down faith? What are some obstacles to trusting God and His Word over an entire lifetime?

b. What does Jesus' parable of the seeds in Matthew 13:20-22 suggest?

c. What warning is given in 1 Corinthians 15:33 about the possible negative influence of faithless people (cf. Proverbs 13:20)?

5. What do these proverbs warn about growing lax in faithfulness? What are the fruits of faithlessness?

Proverbs 11:6b

Proverbs 13:2b

Proverbs 13:15b

Proverbs 25:19

6.a. What truths can we cling to when we do not understand God's way?
Romans 8:28, 31-32

Isaiah 55:8-9 (Psalm 18:30)

Jeremiah 29:11

b. What must be our resolve in difficult times?
Proverbs 3:5

Psalm 27:13-14

Habakkuk 3:17-19

7. What practices do these Scriptures mention which keep our faith fresh and alive?

Philippians 4:6 (Psalm 62:8)

Colossians 3:16

Colossians 2:6-7 (John 15:4-5)

8.a. The Bible tells us that Satan continually tries to tear down our faithfulness. How can we resist this enemy of faith?

Ephesians 4:26-27

1 Peter 5:8-9a

Reference: Note 1, *Satan*, p. 60.

b. Of what are we assured in 2 Thessalonians 3:3?

9.a. Faithfulness also involves being trustworthy. What different aspects of faithfulness as God's servants are mentioned in the following?

2 Corinthians 4:2 (2 Timothy 2:15)

1 Corinthians 15:58

Colossians 1:10

Matthew 28:19

b. How does God equip us as His servants:
to witness for Christ? Acts 1:8

to help other believers? 1 Peter 4:10; Romans 12:4-8

Reference: Note 1, *Spiritual gifts*, p. 68.

10. How does God reward faithfulness?

Matthew 25:21

Proverbs 2:8

Summary

11. Describe the faithfulness which the Holy Spirit can produce in your life (paragraph 1 of commentary).

12. What is key to maintaining faith in God over a lifetime?

13.a. How does it help those around you when you both trust God and are trustworthy and reliable as a person?

b. What rewards of faithfulness do you want for your life?

LESSON 7 NOTES

1 *Spiritual gifts*: Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:7-13; 1 Peter 4:10-11. “The Bible lists numerous spiritual gifts. Many Bible interpreters divide them into natural gifts (such as speaking, serving others, showing mercy) and supernatural gifts (such as doing miracles and speaking in tongues). Some gifts may be enjoyed privately, but the main

reason God gave them is to testify to Christ and to equip individuals to serve others and build up the church. Each believer has been given a special gift of the Spirit, so that he or she can make a unique contribution to the body, Christ's church. Some believe the supernatural gifts were limited to the apostolic age, while others think they have been, and will be, present in the church throughout her history, right up to the present day.”
NIV Topical Study Bible, p. 1278.

Spiritual gifts are discovered as we walk closely with the Lord, try different service opportunities, and observe the response of others. Your spiritual gift(s) will be in line with what you enjoy doing and what causes others to grow in faith.

Lesson 8

Gentleness

This fruit of the Spirit is perhaps the most difficult to translate into English. The Greek word *praotes* is best translated *meekness*, *gentleness* or *humility*, but the New Testament use of it has a fuller, deeper significance than the non-scriptural Greek writings. Vine's New Testament dictionary defines meekness (KJV), or gentleness (NIV) as an inner grace primarily exercised toward God. To have gentleness is to believe God's dealings with us are good, and therefore accept them without dispute or resistance. Gentleness requires humility and is often linked with it in the New Testament. In Matthew 11:29, Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Biblical humility and gentleness has at its foundation a trusting and yielded spirit toward God. While Jesus wished God's plan were different as He faced the cross, His prayer was "Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done" (Matthew 26:42). In Christ, we see that gentleness does not fight, struggle or contend with God's plan.

In English, humility, meekness, mildness, and gentleness suggest weakness. These words are often associated with an inability to help oneself. Yet Christ was gentle and meek in that He had the infinite resources of God at His command to destroy His enemies, but chose not to use them in order to do His Father's good and perfect will (cf. Matthew 26:50-54).

This attitude of submission toward God brings gentleness into our relationships with others, even enemies, as we view them as the means by which God is carrying out His perfect will for our lives and producing

Christ's perfect character in us. This perspective helps us respond to others with gentleness rather than animosity. Jesus demonstrated this gentleness toward others in His mock trial and crucifixion.

In the example of Jesus, we see that biblical meekness or gentleness is the opposite of self-assertiveness and self-interest. It is not occupied with self at all, but, like Jesus, is committed to doing God's will at whatever the cost. The gentleness or meekness developed in the believer by the Holy Spirit, therefore, requires supernatural inner strength and self-control.

In the power of the Spirit, we are called to show "true humility (gentleness or meekness) toward all men" (Titus 3:2). We are to exhibit gentleness in all the various ways we serve God (1 Timothy 6:11), and especially in correcting the weak and erring (Galatians 6:1; 2 Timothy 2:25). We are to receive God's Word with humility (James 1:21) and to share our faith with unbelievers with gentleness (1 Peter 3:15).

As we continue to study *Character that Counts*, we will look at how this powerful fruit of the Spirit is developed in our lives.

1.a. How is biblical meekness or gentleness different from non-biblical?

b. What does it mean to have gentleness or meekness toward God?

c. How does trust and submission toward God lead to gentleness with the people in our lives?

2.a. The opposite of biblical gentleness is self-assertiveness and self-interest which produce the emotional highs and lows characterized by preoccupation with self. What effect does a self-focus have on our relationship with God?

with others?

b. In contrast, how does gentleness affect our relationship with God and others?

3. The secular world often promotes personal autonomy at all costs. What effect can this have on the Christian with regard to gentleness?

4.a. Why was Jesus' meekness and humility a demonstration of self-control and power?

b. How did Jesus demonstrate the power and self-control involved in gentleness before God and man?

Matthew 26:38-39

Matthew 26:50b-54

Philippians 2:5-8

1 Peter 2:23

5.a. The following verses illustrate the perspectives and desires of a person with a gentle, meek and humble spirit toward God. What is true of such a person?

Psalms 25:5

Psalms 27:1, 5

Psalm 27:4, 8b

Psalm 27:13-14

Psalm 139:23-24

b. What is God's response to such a teachable, trusting, obedient spirit?
Proverbs 3:34

Isaiah 57:15; 66:2b

John 14:21, 23

6.a. What is the greatest obstacle to gentleness in our relationship to God?

b. What is the greatest obstacle to gentleness in our relationships to others?

c. What does Proverbs 16:18 warn (cf. 18:12; 29:23)?

7.a. What does the gentleness of the Spirit produce in our words?
Proverbs 15:1a

Proverbs 25:15

Titus 3:2

b. What does the gentleness of the Spirit produce as we instruct others?
Isaiah 50:4a

Galatians 6:1a

2 Timothy 2:24-25

James 3:17

c. What does the gentleness of the Spirit produce in our witness for Christ?

1 Peter 3:15

8. What are we instructed to aspire to as Christians?

Colossians 3:12

Philippians 4:5

1 Timothy 3:3; 6:11

9.a. What is God's promise to the gentle-spirited person?

Proverbs 15:33

Matthew 5:3 (Matthew 18:4)

Luke 14:11

James 4:10

b. How did God demonstrate this with Jesus?

Philippians 2:9-11

Summary

10. Why does gentleness as a fruit of the Spirit require great power and self-control?

11.a. How does gentleness manifest itself in your relationship with God?

b. How does gentleness manifest itself in your relationship with others?

12.a. How is this product of the Spirit's control important in your relationship with God and others?

b. Why is gentleness important in your witness to the non-believing world?

13.a. In what ways can you imitate Jesus' gentleness before God and man to demonstrate the power of God within you?

b. What facets of the Spirit's gentleness would you like God to increase in your life today?

Lesson 9

Self-Control

The word for self-control comes from the Greek word for strength, relating self-control to the strength it takes to control the body, emotions and will. *Vine's Expository Dictionary* defines self-control as the power not to abuse the powers God has given us. Examples of these powers would be everything from eating, sex and the use of words to physical, material or political power over those weaker.

Throughout the Bible, God gives guidelines for how He has created us to enjoy and use the powers He has bestowed upon us--guidelines that are healthy, constructive, and always in our best interest. Overall, they call us to practice mercy and moderation and above all to let our wills be under the direction of God's Spirit.

As you have probably observed by now, every aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is dependent on the rest. We need self-control to have biblical love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and gentleness. As the Spirit is allowed to develop these virtues in our lives, they motivate self-control--the good use, rather than abuse--of our God-given powers and freedoms.

Along with its cousin, patience, self-control may be the most difficult aspect of the fruit of the Spirit to discuss. Almost everyone has at least one area in which there is a daily battle with temptation and discouragement. In this final study, we will observe different areas in which God's Spirit promises to win the battle for self-control as we persevere in faith.

1. Why is self-control needed in each of the following areas of life?

physical:

emotional:

in relationships:

money and possessions:

spiritual:

2.a. How do the following verses describe the battle that we have over self-control?

Galatians 5:17, 19-21

Romans 7:21-23

b. What solution does the Scriptures give to the problem of self-control?

Romans 8:5

Galatians 5:16,25

Colossians 3:1-2

3. What do the Scriptures suggest about self control in the following?

Proverbs 16:32

Proverbs 25:28

Proverbs 29:11

1 Peter 4:7b

4.a. What does James say about the power of the tongue?

James 3:2

James 3:3-6

James 3:8

b. What abuses of the power of words are mentioned in the following?
James 3:9-10a

Ephesians 5:4; 4:31

c. What does the Spirit lead and empower us to do?

Ephesians 4:29

5. What self-control is encouraged in these verses?

Proverbs 23:20 (23:29-35)

Proverbs 25:16

1 Thessalonians 5:5-8 (Romans 13:13)

6. What perspectives regarding sexual immorality do these verses give the believer?

Proverbs 5:3-5; 15-17

1 Corinthians 6:15

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

1 Thessalonians 4:3

7.a. How does God promise to help the committed believer with temptation?

1 Corinthians 10:13

Hebrews 2:18 (speaking of Jesus)

Hebrews 4:15-16

b. How does He promise to help when we fall? 1 John 1:9

c. What is our part?

Romans 12:1-2

Romans 13:14

Ephesians 5:18

Note: The analogy here with wine shows how being filled with the Spirit controls one's life as completely as alcohol does when one is drunk.

Summary

8. What are some of the powers God has given us which we can abuse or use for good?

9. Why is self-control essential to fulfilled living?

10.a. In what areas are you struggling to have self-control right now?

b. How does God promise to build self-control to these areas of your life?

c. What is your part?

Lesson 10

Character that Counts

Simply stated, what we have studied in Galatians 5:22-23 is what we look like when we allow Jesus Christ to live His life through us. Most would agree that the fruit of the Spirit--unconditional love, even toward enemies; joy, peace, patience and faithfulness even in hardship; kindness and goodness even in the face of ill-treatment; and self-control over body, emotions, and tongue--are virtues impossible to attain by human efforts. The Bible affirms this (Romans 7:21-23; John 15:5). But when Jesus Christ is allowed to produce His life in us through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, this holistic lifestyle is produced as naturally as grapes on a vine.

In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul speaks of ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ as one and not of ‘fruits’ as separate because Christ is always all of these in us. If we are letting the Holy Spirit control our lives, when we need patience, He produces patience. When we need love that exceeds normal human love, the Spirit of Christ gives us love. When we need self-control over our natural impulses, the Holy Spirit gives self-control.

Charles Trumbell wrote, “Jesus Christ does not want to be our helper; He wants to be our life. He does not want us to work for Him. He wants us to let Him do His work through us. . . . When our life is not only Christ’s but *Christ*, our life will be a winning life; for He cannot fail. And a winning life is a fruit-bearing life, a serving life.”

The Christ-controlled life does not mean our individual personality is abolished. Rather, Jesus Christ expresses Himself through the unique personalities and gifts He has given us. Paul was a logical thinker before his conversion, and God used this element so that he could write logical treatises like the letter to the Romans. John thought more mystically, and God used this element of his personality to write the Gospel of John.

The reproduction of Christ's life in us is through the power of the Holy Spirit. Theologically, this new life within us is sometimes called the abiding life (John 15), or the exchanged life (Galatians 2:20), or the Spirit-filled life (Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:22-23). But all picture the wondrous truth that God does not set the standard high, then leave us to struggle and fail. He promises to produce godly character in us as we let Jesus Christ be Lord of our lives.

The Christ-controlled life begins when we receive Christ into our lives (John 1:12). At that time, God's Spirit takes up residence within us and we are given a new heart that yearns to please God (Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 14:16-20; Romans 8:9) The Holy Spirit empowers the Christian to resist temptation and steadily grow in godly character (Ephesians 3:16,20; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 4:13). Consequently, through the weeks and months and years of total commitment, our lives become a clearer and clearer reflection of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

Only as we understand these principles can a study of the fruit of the Spirit be experiential and not just academic. In our final lesson on *Character that Counts*, we will review these keys to living a life that reflects the very nature of God.

1. Christ living His life through the Christian begins when we receive Christ into our lives. To receive Jesus Christ involves acknowledging our sin to God (Romans 3:23), thanking Him for allowing Jesus Christ to take the penalty for our sin on the cross (Romans 6:23) and inviting Christ to come into our lives and make us what He wants us to be (John 1:12). What is His promise in Revelation 3:20?

Reference: Note 1, "Why did Christ have to die in my place?" p.14

2. When we invite Jesus Christ into our lives, Romans 6 explains that the believer is identified with, or baptized into, Christ's death, burial and resurrection. We are given *a new nature* that yearns to please God, and our old sin nature is no longer controlling our lives or actions. What happens at the moment a person puts faith in Jesus Christ for salvation according to Romans 6:3-4?

Note: *baptism* (6:3) means to be placed into or identified with. *live a new life* (6:4) means to be raised with Jesus Christ to new life in God's presence, forever set free from the power of sin and death.

3.a. The following diagram illustrates principles of identification with Christ. How would you summarize what this means in your life?

OLD LIFE
In Adam
(Romans 5:12)

Sinful
Death
(Romans 6:23)

NEW LIFE
In Christ
(Romans 5:18-19)

Cleansed from Sin
Life
(Ezekiel 36:26)

DRIVE

To please...SELF

To please...GOD

b. How are the results of being united with Christ in His death described in Romans 6:5-7?

Note: *old self* (6:6-7) is the person we are spiritually before receiving Christ. *body of sin* is a figurative expression for self in its pre-Christian state, dominated by sin. *freed from sin* means set free from the bondage and power of sin.

4. The wonderful message of Romans 6 is that through our identification with Christ, God gives us a new heart just like the heart of His Son. This new heart desires only to please God. It is totally dead to sin and absent from any desire to sin. If you have placed your faith in Christ, this is the “real” you.

In her book, *31 Days of Praise* (pp. 131-132), Ruth Myers describes the battle and victory of the Christian life as follows:

Sin fights against the Holy Spirit within us for control of our bodies and our personalities. And sin is cagey. It masquerades as our master who deserves our loyalty. It poses as an essential part of us, pretending to be our true nature...if we yield to its demands or swallow its bait, it either dulls our consciences or plagues us with guilt, whipping us even after we confess to the Lord. In countless ways indwelling sin causes us distress, struggles, and defeats.

But from God’s viewpoint, it is not our true, new self who sins, but sin that lives in us (Romans 7:17, 20). Our sins spring from our old sinful tendencies that are no longer our true identity. The real you, the real me, hates sin and is aligned against it. The real you is distressed when sin prevails and longs for your whole personality to be con-formed to the image of Christ. The real you is dead to sin and alive to God.

a. According to this quote, how does sin seek to control us (paragraph 1)?

b. How does paragraph 2 describe the new you in Christ?

c. Why is it important for you to see yourself this way?

5.a. How is identification with Christ described in the following?
John 14:19-20 (Jesus speaking)

Galatians 2:20a (Colossians 1:27b)

Galatians 3:27

Ephesians 2:6

b. What picture of identification with Christ is given in Ezekiel 36:26?

6.a. What is the first step toward a believer experiencing victory over sin according to Romans 6:11?

Important Reference: Note 1, *dead to sin*, p. 96.

b. Romans 6 says it is important to *know* we are brand new in Christ, *count on it* being true, and *yield* our lives to Him to empower for His glory. What choices are we encouraged to make as believers?

Romans 6:12-13

7. While our new nature in Christ desires to please God, it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to overcome temptation and sin. Paul speaks of the continual battle with the old sin nature in Romans 7:21-23 and Galatians 5:17. How can we receive Christ's power to live for God?

Romans 8:5-6

Galatians 5:16, 25 (Ephesians 5:18)

8. What results from allowing Christ to live His life through us in the power of the Holy Spirit?

Ezekiel 36:27 (Philippians 2:13)

Isaiah 59:21

John 17:26 (Jesus' prayer for believers)

Philippians 4:13

9. In closing, note what stood out to you about each aspect of the Spirit's fruit in Galatians 5:22-23. As we yield our lives to Christ, what does His Spirit produce in the way of character that counts?

love:

joy:

peace:

patience:

kindness:

goodness:

faithfulness:

gentleness:

self-control:

Summary

10.a. How would you define the Christ-controlled life?

b. When does this lifestyle begin?

11.a. What does it mean to be identified with Christ (Questions 2-5)?

b. How would you summarize what this means in your life?

12. What lifestyle does the Holy Spirit produce in you when you ask Him to control your life?

13. How would you summarize what God has taught you in this study on *Character that Counts*?

LESSON 10 NOTES

1 *dead to sin* (Romans 6:2,11). Death in the biblical sense means separation, as in the separation of body and spirit in physical death or separation from God because of sin (“the wages of sin is death,” 6:23). Therefore, to be dead to sin means that “in our innermost being we have been separated from sin; sin is no longer our nature and we no longer need to let it be our master. According to Romans 7, sin still indwells us; the old sinful patterns and potential are still written in our minds and bodies. But we are to see ourselves in the light of the cross and empty tomb. These stand within us as a powerful barrier between indwelling sinfulness and the new person we truly are in our innermost being. We’re to let them serve as a powerful blockade, separating our new selves from what remains of our old sinful tendencies. The cross and the empty tomb form an immovable boundary between who we are and who we have become, between our former realm of sin and guilt and death and our new realm of righteousness and life.” Ruth Myers, *31 Days of Praise*, pp. 131-132.

2 *Works of the Holy Spirit*. “Because the Holy Spirit is the source of power in the Christian’s life, it is important to know who He is. Throughout Scripture, the Holy Spirit is revealed along with the Father and the Son as a full and distinct person of the Godhead. As a divine Person, the Holy Spirit is eternal, everywhere present, almighty, perfectly wise, perfectly just and perfectly good (Hebrews 9:14, Psalm 139:7-10, 1 Corinthians 2:10-11). The Holy Spirit’s distinct role is the Sanctifier who frees us to lead new lives in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17).

It is the Holy Spirit who leads us to spiritual rebirth, brings Christ’s presence to us, keeps us in touch with God, makes us realize God’s love, gives us power to witness and to live the Christian life, and gives us spiritual gifts with which to serve the body of Christ (Titus 3:5, John 14:16-18, Romans 8:26, Romans 5:5, Acts 1:8, Romans 8:5-9, 1 Corinthians 2:4-12).

He teaches, encourages, comforts, pleads for us and leads us into all truth (John 16:13, Acts 9:31, John 14:16, Romans 8:27). Romans 8 tells us that

allowing our minds to be controlled by the Holy Spirit is the key to ‘life and peace’ (8:6) and experiencing victory over the sin that seeks to control us.” Creative Living Bible Study, *Transformation of the Heart*, pg. 77. See also Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, p. 15.

Bibliography

The Interlinear Greek—English New Testament, Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited, London, England, copyright 1958.

Life Application Bible, New International Version, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois, copyright 1991.

Ruth Myers, *31 Days of Praise*, Multnomah Publishers, Inc., Sisters, Oregon, copyright 1994.

The NIV Study Bible, Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, Michigan, copyright 1985.

The NIV Topical Study Bible, New International Version, Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, Michigan, copyright 1989.

A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, pp. 21-22. Christian Publications, Inc., Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, copyright 1982.

Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, Fleming . Revell, Grand Rapids, Michigan, copyright 1981.

The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible, New International Version, Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, Michigan, copyright 1983.

Footnote Directory

Lesson	Page	Note	Reference
1	14	1	“Why did Christ have to die in my place?”
	15	2	Holy Spirit. See also Note 8, p. 71.
2	18	1	Seeking joy in wrong places.
	19	2	<i>fullness in Christ</i> (Colossians 2:10).
3	35	1	<i>be patient with yourself...</i>
4	44	1	Running the race...(Hebrews. 12:1).
	44	2	The crown of life (James 1:12).
6	60	1	<i>Satan</i> , the devil.
7	68	1	Spiritual gifts.
10	96	1	<i>dead to sin</i> (Romans 6:2,11).
	96	2	Works of the Holy Spirit.

**CHARACTER THAT COUNTS
STUDIES ON THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT**

© Copyright 2000 by Creative Living International
of the United States of America.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced
in any form without written permission from
Creative Living International,
11560 Brass Lantern Court, Reston, Virginia 20194.

Creative Living International is a Christian organization
designed to help individuals find practical
biblical principles for today's living.

Scripture quotations are from the
Holy Bible: New International Version (NIV).
Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society.

Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN: 1-932395-28-8

Sponsored by the ministry of: