

The Fruits of the Spirit

If, as Jesus said, trees and people are both known by the type of fruit they bear, what "fruits"—evidence of the Holy Spirit at work—should others see in the life of a Christian?

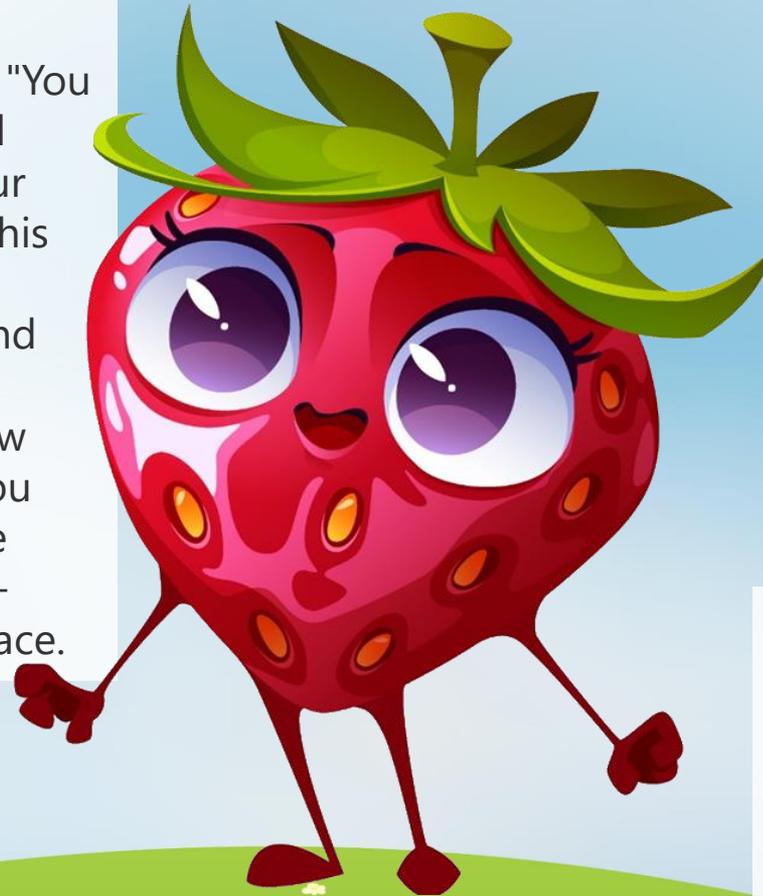
*"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."
(Galatians 5:22-23)*

Christians aren't perfect; we're all works in progress. In each case, however, there are some things you can do to help speed the process along.



The all-encompassing fruit—love

When Jesus was asked which was the most important commandment, He answered, "You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You should love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-39) In other words, if you can do those two things—love God and love your neighbor—everything else will fall into place.



Love is supposed to be the trademark of a Christian. Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35) He intends for every true Christian to be a reflection of His love, so that others can find and experience that love too.

The sunshine fruit—joy

The Holy Spirit can help us rise above our problems, big or small, and cause us to be happy and cheerful in spite of circumstances. The secret to having the joy of the Lord is taking the time to fill up on God's Word, so that you have a reservoir of His Spirit within to draw from.



It also helps greatly to count your blessings, to think about all the good things the Lord has given you and done for you. "Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." (Philippians 4:8)

The unshakable fruit—peace

Jesus promises us peace—another working of the Holy Spirit. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27)



Just as Jesus calmed the stormy sea when His disciples thought their ship was sinking and they were about to drown, He can calm the storms of life and give you inner peace.

The conciliatory fruit—longsuffering

"If my brother offends me, how many times shall I forgive him?" someone once asked Jesus, and then offered a hopeful guess. "Seven times?"

"No, seventy times seven!" was Jesus' reply. In other words, we should never stop forgiving.



Hasn't God forgiven you "seventy times seven"? Doesn't that make you want to extend that same love and mercy and forgiveness to others, so they can also come to know Him and experience His forgiveness?

The irresistible fruit— kindness

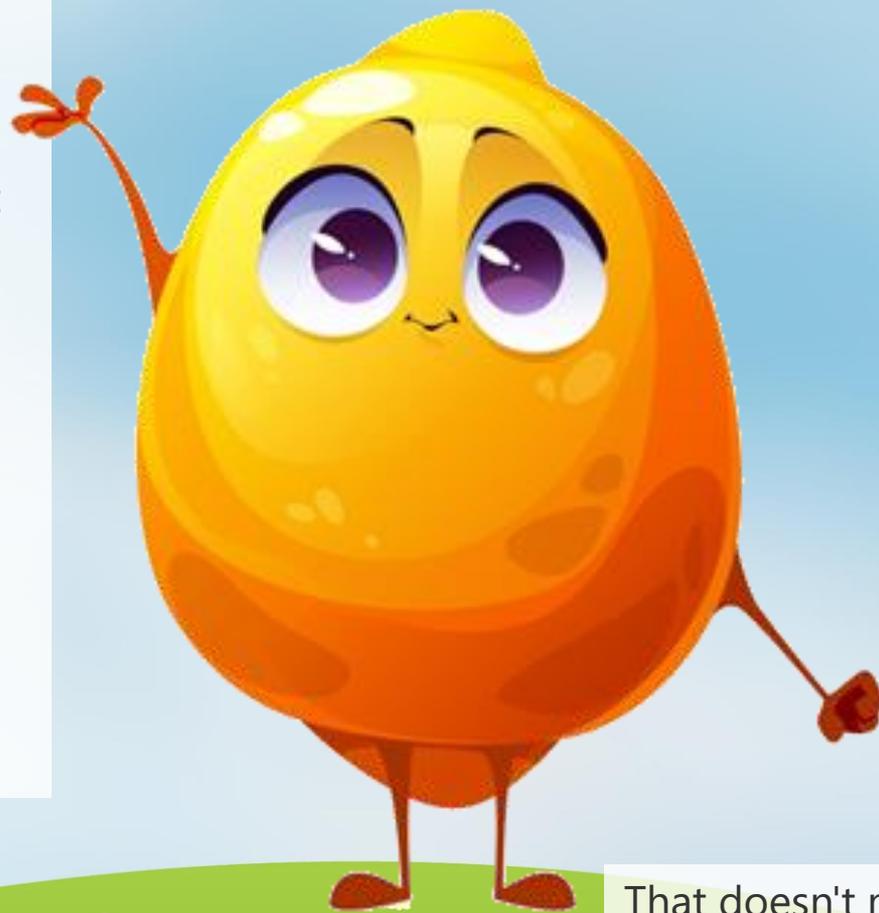
Kindness is love in action, love translated into simple everyday terms. It's being considerate of others. It's living the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. (Matthew 7:12) It's turning a blind eye to the flubs and foibles of others. It's being as tenderhearted and forgiving toward others as God is with you.



Kindness generates goodwill. Your kind words and kind deeds tell others that their happiness and well-being are important to you, and that makes them want to respond in like manner. Kindness is one of the hardest things to give away, because it's nearly always returned. Kindness costs nothing, but can accomplish so much. A kind smile or a kind word can make all the difference in the world to someone who's having a hard day. A little bit of love goes such a long way!

The exemplary fruit— goodness

Jesus told His first followers, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."
(Matthew 5:14-16)



That doesn't mean you are to be good in a self-righteous goody-two-shoes type of way. That isn't the goodness Jesus gives. Rather it is genuine goodness of the heart that is shown in honesty, empathy, helpfulness, and a multitude of other ways.

The one-day-at-a-time fruit—faithfulness

Faithful people are dependable and true. They're faithful to Jesus, faithful to the work He has called them to, whatever that may be, and faithful to keep their word and fulfill their obligations to others. All of these things are part of their Christian duty.

Faithful people are so because they are full of faith. Their faith gives them the strength to be responsible, to put their faith into action

How do you remain faithful? Stay close to Jesus, and take life one day at a time!



The winsome fruit— gentleness

A gentle spirit is one of the keys to success with people. It can make all the difference in how open others are to your wishes, opinions, and ideas.

Jesus is pictured in the Bible as a lamb, a mother hen, and a gentle, concerned shepherd. He said of Himself, "I am gentle and lowly in heart." (Matthew 11:29) He didn't force anyone to believe in or follow Him; He showed compassion, and won them into His heavenly kingdom by His loving example. If you want to win friends, follow His example.



The liberating fruit—self-control

Paradoxical as it may seem, the secret to self-control is giving up control. It's in yielding to God and letting His Holy Spirit take control of your thoughts, your actions and your life.



How do I receive these fruits of the Spirit?

"Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." (John 16:24) Just ask and then receive them from your heavenly Father, who loves you and wants to make you happy.



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