

Study 15  
Galatians 5:22-26

1. a) What do you think the imagery of the fruit of the Spirit conveys about character change?

The imagery of the fruit of the Spirit conveys that character change in a believer is gradual, organic, and inevitable. Just as the fruit grows over time, the transformation in a Christian's character through the Holy Spirit is not instant but develops naturally and steadily. The fruit also reflects an interconnectedness of virtues, suggesting that true spiritual maturity encompasses all aspects of the Spirit's work in a believer's life, harmoniously transforming their attitudes and actions.

b) Reflection Question. How have you seen any of this fruit in your lives over the years in your own life?

2. a) Why is the fruit mentioned in singular?

The fruit of the Spirit is mentioned in the singular because it represents a unified whole of Christlike character, rather than individual isolated traits. Each virtue, such as love, joy, peace, and others, are interconnected and grow together in the life of a believer, forming one collective expression of spiritual maturity. The singular term emphasizes that true Christian character cannot be divided or selectively cultivated; all of these virtues work together as a complete transformation in a person's life.

b) Discussion Question. Can you give examples of the fruit being fake? How can you tell?

Examples of fake fruit might include:

- **Fake kindness:** Someone may act kindly to gain personal advantage or to appear virtuous, rather than out of genuine love or concern for others.
- **Fake peace:** A person may appear peaceful outwardly, but inside they might harbor resentment or anxiety. They might avoid conflict without truly surrendering their worries to God.
- **Fake patience:** Someone may seem patient on the surface, but they are simply suppressing frustration or anger, rather than having a calm, enduring spirit.

You can tell if the fruit is fake by looking for **authenticity and consistency**. Genuine fruit of the Spirit comes from a deep, internal transformation, not from external motives or superficial actions. It endures over time and shows itself in a person's overall character, not just in isolated moments. Fake fruit tends to be inconsistent, fleeting, and driven by self-interest or the desire to appear righteous.

3. What does Paul mean by saying that "against such things, there is no law" in verse 23?

When Paul says, "against such things, there is no law" in Galatians 5:23, he means that the qualities of the fruit of the Spirit—such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—are in harmony with God's law. These virtues are the essence of the character God desires for His people, and no law or rule could ever oppose or restrict them because they reflect God's will perfectly. In contrast to legalism or the harshness of trying to follow the law in one's own strength, the fruit of the Spirit is freely given and aligns with the highest moral and spiritual ideals, making the law unnecessary for those who live by the Spirit. There is no conflict between living out these virtues and obeying God's commands because they are the fulfillment of His will.

4. A person can be patient due to his own temperament or due to the fruit of the spirit. What is the source of his patience if the former is the case and what is the source if it is the latter?

If a person's patience comes from their own temperament, the source is natural or inborn character traits, often shaped by upbringing or personality. This kind of patience may be genuine in its outward form but lacks the deeper, spiritual foundation that comes from God. It can sometimes be limited or self-serving, as it is based on personal disposition rather than a divinely inspired character change.

On the other hand, if patience is the fruit of the Spirit, the source is the Holy Spirit's work within the person. This kind of patience goes beyond mere natural temperament, reflecting a supernatural endurance and forbearance that comes from a deep trust in God. It is rooted in love, humility, and a desire to reflect Christ's patience with others. This spiritual patience is sustained even in difficult circumstances and is part of the overall transformation God brings to a believer's character.

5. Look at *Galatians 5:24 (ESV)* *And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.* What does this practically mean? Does it mean we no longer feel and struggle with these desires? How do we crucify these desires?

In Galatians 5:24, Paul is emphasizing the spiritual transformation that occurs when someone belongs to Christ. The phrase "crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" means that those who are in Christ have, in essence, made a decisive break with the old sinful nature and its desires. This isn't about the complete elimination of sinful desires in an immediate or physical sense, but rather about a radical shift in priorities, identity, and allegiance.

### **Practical Meaning:**

- **Crucifying the flesh** means that we have chosen to reject and renounce the sinful desires of our old self. It involves actively resisting temptation and choosing God's will over our own.
- **It doesn't mean that we no longer feel or struggle with these desires**; rather, it means that we no longer allow these desires to control or define us. The struggle may continue, but our response is now shaped by the Holy Spirit, not by the flesh.
- **How to crucify these desires**: This process is ongoing and involves daily surrender to God, choosing to walk in the Spirit, and actively putting to death those desires that contradict God's will. It's not by our own strength but by relying on the Holy Spirit to empower us to resist sin and pursue righteousness. Practically, this involves setting our minds on things above (Colossians 3:2), filling our hearts with God's Word, and continually choosing obedience over indulgence in sinful desires.

In summary, crucifying the flesh is a declaration of a new identity in Christ. Though the struggle with sin continues, believers are called to live out their new nature, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and to continually put to death the old sinful tendencies.

6. How does one practically produce the fruit of the Spirit since the fruit comes from inside out and one cannot artificially do things on the outside into produce the fruit as it is a product of the Spirit? Look at John 15:1-11, Eph 5:18-19 and Col 3: 16 for practical points.

To practically produce the fruit of the Spirit, we must understand that it is not something we can merely manufacture by external actions or efforts. The fruit of the Spirit is the result of an internal transformation, as the Holy Spirit works in us and through us. Let's break down some practical steps from the passages you mentioned:

### 1. John 15:1-11 - Abiding in Christ

- **Key Insight**: Jesus compares Himself to the vine and believers to the branches. "Abiding" in Christ is the key to bearing fruit. Without Him, we can do nothing.
- **Practical Application**: To bear the fruit of the Spirit, we must stay connected to Jesus. This means cultivating a deep relationship with Him through prayer, reading and meditating on Scripture, and living in obedience to His Word. As we remain in Him, the Spirit produces the fruit in us naturally. The more we yield to Him, the more He can work in and through us.

### 2. Ephesians 5:18-19 - Being Filled with the Spirit

- **Key Insight**: Paul urges believers to be "filled with the Spirit" rather than be controlled by other influences (like alcohol). The filling of the Spirit leads to singing praises, giving thanks, and submitting to one another.

- **Practical Application:** To produce the fruit of the Spirit, we need to daily surrender to the Holy Spirit, asking to be filled with Him. Being filled with the Spirit means allowing Him to take control of our thoughts, words, and actions. One practical way to experience this is by cultivating an attitude of gratitude and worship, as seen in the passage. Singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs helps keep our hearts aligned with the Spirit's work in us.

### 3. Colossians 3:16 - Letting the Word of Christ Dwell in Us Richly

- **Key Insight:** Paul encourages believers to let the Word of Christ dwell in them richly, teaching and admonishing one another with all wisdom, singing with thankfulness in their hearts.
- **Practical Application:** The Word of God is vital for producing the fruit of the Spirit. We should immerse ourselves in Scripture regularly, allowing it to shape our thoughts, actions, and attitudes. As we internalize God's Word, it transforms us and aligns our hearts with His will, which enables the Spirit to bear fruit in our lives. This also includes sharing and teaching the Word with others, as this helps reinforce the work of the Spirit in our lives.

### Putting It All Together

To practically produce the fruit of the Spirit:

1. **Abide in Christ:** Stay close to Jesus, through regular prayer, Scripture reading, and fellowship.
2. **Be filled with the Holy Spirit:** Daily surrender to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to fill and guide you, avoiding influences that would lead you away from Him.
3. **Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly:** Regularly read and meditate on the Bible, allowing it to shape your thoughts and actions.
4. **Cultivate a heart of worship and gratitude:** Praise God and give thanks in all circumstances, as this fosters a Spirit-filled life that bears fruit.

By following these practical steps, we invite the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts and lives, producing the fruit of the Spirit naturally from the inside out.

### Case History

James was a leader in the 5<sup>th</sup> Baptist church and known as a godly man as he rarely lost control of his temper, was soft-spoken, and generally everyone liked him. He easily won his elections in the local congregational elections. One day two groups of people were at odds with each other in church. One group wanted to have their pastor sacked as they had heard that he was involved in an illicit affair with a church member for the last 1 year. The other group was his life group members who had staunchly defended him. One of the leaders of the church James conducted the investigation with two other leaders and they established that the pastor was guilty even though the accusations were all made up by a disgruntled member of the church. The pastor steadfastly insisted on remaining at his post and still denied the accusations. However, the friction between the two groups of church members was enormous with some of them really heated, loud and even some threatening physical violence if nothing was done about the pastor. They turned to James for resolution.

James refused to refute or deny these accusations saying they were hurtful in nature and not edifying to anyone. He was pressured to keep the pastor on as his supporters were in the majority. To placate the detractors of the pastor he restricted the yearly increment of the pastor. Everyone did not get what they wanted but had something and he managed to placate both sides.

- a) Discussion Question. Do you think James exhibited the fruit of the Spirit when he handled the situation with gentleness, patience, kindness, and goodness? If you disagree then why?
  
- b) Discussion Question. What are the long-term risks of what James had done?
  
- c) Reflection Question. What are the steps you are currently taking to cultivate the fruit of the Holy Spirit?

#### **Takeaway**

**Galatians 5:22-26 emphasizes that true freedom in Christ involves living in the Spirit, not indulging in sinful desires. The fruit of the Spirit— love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—naturally grows in believers through the Holy Spirit, transforming them from within. The key to bearing this fruit is focusing on God's desires and allowing the Spirit to cultivate these qualities over time.**