

# Christian Character

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In one of His final conversations with His disciples, Jesus talked about the importance of fruit-bearing. He said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener . . . I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit” (John 15:1, 5).

Jesus used the analogy of the vine to teach about the necessary relationship which must exist between the Holy Spirit and the believer so that Christ-likeness may be produced in the believer. It is the Holy Spirit who produces spiritual fruit in us as we yield to Him. The fruit of the Spirit is the character of Christ produced in us, so that we might show the world what He is like.

In a vine, the branches depend upon the trunk for life, and the vine needs the branches to bear its fruit. Jesus told His disciples that He had come into the world to show the world what the Father is like. He said that when He went away He would send the Holy Spirit to be with them and help them. The Spirit would reveal Jesus to them. As Jesus took a human body to reveal the Father to the world, so the eternal Spirit dwells within the believer to reveal Christ to the world. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

In this lesson you will study what the Bible says about the fruit of the Spirit, which is Christian character, and how it is produced in your life by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that you may honor God.

## ***lesson outline***

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Fruit Identified

Fruit Illustrated

Fruit Required

Fruit Realized

## ***lesson objectives***

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When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

1. State a principle of fruit-bearing.
2. Compare works of the flesh with fruit of the Spirit.
3. Identify true statements concerning what Christ taught about the vine and its branches.
4. Indicate conditions for fruit-bearing.
5. State why fruit-bearing is required of Christians.
6. Describe ways you can promote spiritual fruit-bearing in your own life.
7. Summarize the apostle Paul's teaching concerning the desired relationship between spiritual fruit and spiritual gifts.

## ***learning activities***

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1. Read the course introduction carefully before you begin this lesson, and study the course objectives.
2. Read carefully the first two pages of this lesson, including the opening paragraphs, the lesson outline, and the lesson objectives. Also read the enabling objectives which are given throughout the lesson. These objectives tell you what you should be able to do after you have studied the lesson. The study questions and the self-test are based on them.
3. It is important that you know the meaning of the key words listed at the beginning of each lesson. Before you begin

the lesson, find each key word which you do not know in the glossary at the end of this study guide, and learn its meaning. Refer to the glossary as often as necessary while studying the lesson.

4. As background for this lesson, read John 15 and Galatians 5. Study the lesson development. Find and read all Bible verses mentioned. Answer the study questions, and check your answers with those given at the end of the lesson. Use a separate notebook for long answers.
5. When you have completed the lesson, answer the questions in the self-test. Check your answers with those given at the back of this study guide.

### ***key words***

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Understanding the key words listed at the beginning of each lesson will help you as you study. You will find them defined in alphabetical order in the glossary that is in the back of your study guide. If you are in doubt about the meaning of any of the words on the list, you may look them up now or when you come across them in your reading.

abundant	empowering	reproduction
characteristics	interdependent	sanctification
conflict	manifests	stability
cultivate	perseverance	vegetation
dimensions	principle	vineyard
discipleship	pruning	

## *lesson development*

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### **FRUIT IDENTIFIED**

#### **Christlike Character**

**Objective 1.** *State a principle of fruit-bearing.*

The principle of fruit-bearing is revealed in the first chapter of Genesis: “Then God said, ‘Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds’” (Genesis 1:11). Note that each plant and tree was to produce fruit according to its kind.

Spiritual fruit-bearing follows the same principle. John the Baptist, the Messiah’s herald, demanded from his converts: “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:8). In John 15:1–16, Jesus emphasized this principle by making it clear that His followers, in order to develop and maintain spiritual life, must bear abundant fruit for God.

What kind of fruit was Jesus talking about? The answer is given in Galatians 5:22–23: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” The fruit of the Spirit is the Christlike character: a character that reveals what Jesus is like. It is the outward expression of the holy nature of God in the believer. It is actually the development of the life of Christ in the Christian.

### ***Application***

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- 1** Which of these is an example of the principle of fruit-bearing?
- a)** A fig tree produces leaves.
  - b)** A Spirit-filled person produces anger.
  - c)** An orange tree produces oranges.



## A New Nature

**Objective 2.** *Compare works of the flesh with fruit of the Spirit.*

Galatians 5:16–26 describes a spiritual conflict between the sinful nature and the divine nature. The conflict is this: “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want” (v. 17). The word contrary means “opposite in character.”

When the believer does not yield to the Spirit’s control, he is unable to resist the desires of the sinful nature. But when the Spirit is in control, he is like fertile ground in which the Spirit can produce His fruit. By the power of the Spirit he can overcome the desires of the flesh and live an abundant and fruitful life.

To win in this spiritual conflict, the secret is to walk in the Spirit. “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:24–25). How do we do this? By listening to His voice, following His leading, obeying His orders, and trusting and depending on Him.

To show how sharp is the contrast between the acts of the sinful nature and the fruit of the Spirit, the writer to the Galatians listed them in the very same chapter (Galatians 5). As long as the Holy Spirit is in control, abiding in and empowering the believer, He naturally manifests His fruit in the believer (see Romans 8:5–10). In the same manner, the sinful nature of the unbeliever produces its work in him. Do you see the principle of fruit-bearing here? Each produces fruit after its kind. In John 14:16–17 we read the words of Jesus to His disciples: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.” The word another in this text is taken from a Greek word suggesting “another of the same kind.” The Holy Spirit is of the same kind as Jesus. It is the nature of the Holy Spirit to produce a Christlike character

in the believer. It is the nature of sinful flesh to produce wickedness.

### Application

**2** In your notebook make two headings as shown below, and list the works of flesh and the fruit of the Spirit in the two columns, based on Galatians 5:19–23.

Works of the Flesh	Fruit of the Spirit
..... <i>Sexual immorality</i> .....	..... <i>Love</i> .....
.....	.....
.....	.....

**3** Fifteen works of the flesh are listed in Galatians 5. Similar lists are found in Romans 1:29–31, Romans 3:12–18, Mark 7:22–23, and Ephesians 4:17–32. Add to your list of works of the flesh any others mentioned in these texts.

The Word of God is absolute in stating that “those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21). These works of the flesh are characteristics of sin. “Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it” (Romans 7:20).

**4** Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 and 2 Peter 1:5–7. These passages give more qualities of the new nature that are produced in the believer by the Holy Spirit. Add to your list of the fruit of the Spirit any qualities not previously listed which are mentioned in these Scriptures.

The Word of God states clearly the reward for allowing the Holy Spirit to produce the characteristics of Christ in you. In 2 Peter 1, Peter tells of the need to develop the spiritual dimensions of one’s life. With this development come maturity and stability, which enable one to live above the old, sinful nature. Then in verses 10–11 he says, “For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

- 5** Fill in the blanks based on the principle of fruit-bearing.
- a)** A person who is being led by the desires of his old nature will produce characteristics that are the ..... of the .....
- b)** The person controlled by the Spirit will have the characteristics which are the ..... of the ....., because he is being ..... by the Spirit.
- c)** The fruit of the Spirit is the development of a Christlike .....



A fruit is a living thing. If you have yielded control of your life to the Holy Spirit, He will unfailingly produce in you the fruit of the Spirit in a continuous and plentiful harvest. As a Christian, all of the genuine and lasting beauty of character adorning your life, the Christlikeness, inward and outward, is the work of the Holy Spirit—“until Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19).

## FRUIT ILLUSTRATED

### The Vine and Its Branches

**Objective 3.** *Identify true statements concerning what Christ taught about the vine and its branches.*

In John 15:1–17 Jesus used the grapevine and its branches to picture the kind of relationship that must exist between Himself and the believer in order for the believer to have fruitfulness. One does not need to be an expert in gardening to realize that what is of greatest importance in a grapevine is the quality of fruit the vine bears. This is seen in the way Jesus spoke about the branches of the vine:

1. There are branches which bear no fruit—they are cut off! (John 15:2). The purpose of a branch is to bear fruit. If a branch does not bear fruit, it is of no value to the gardener, so he cuts it off. A sad example of this kind of judgment is found in the history of the nation of Israel. Israel was designed to

be God's vineyard, to reflect God's love, mercy, goodness, and glory among the nations. But Israel failed, and judgment followed. Here is what God said about the failure of Israel as His vineyard:

What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled (Isaiah 5:4–5; see also Romans 11:21).

### ***Application***

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**6** This Scripture means that instead of producing the expected fruit, according to the fruit-bearing principle, the nation of Israel was producing

- a)** fruit of opposite character to what was expected.
- b)** no fruit at all.
- c)** mainly good fruit.

**7** As a result, the nation of Israel was

- a)** protected by God.
  - b)** no longer protected by God.
  - c)** able to lead other nations to God.
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2. There are branches which do not remain attached to the vine—they are thrown into the fire and burned. “No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine” (John 15:4). It is impossible for these branches to bear fruit, because they are not a part of the vine.

Have you noticed that a branch which has been broken off soon begins to turn brown and die? Because it is broken, the vital connection to the life of the vine is severed. No longer can the life-giving resources flow into the branch, and without this the branch quickly dies. Then it is gathered up and burned.

Salvation is a real experience of surrendering oneself in faith to the Savior and becoming a new creation. It is our link



to the life-giving resources of Jesus Christ. It is a personal commitment to Jesus Christ and an ongoing relationship with Him. He is the vine, and we are the branches (John 15:5). To be in Christ is not merely to join a religion or perform religious ceremonies or learn religious creeds. It is a commitment of your life to Him and a desire to be transformed into His image by the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. There are branches that bear fruit—they are trimmed clean. “He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful” (John 15:2). The gardener wants the life-giving resources of the vine to flow into the fruit rather than into worthless leaves and branches. Therefore, in order to produce more and better fruit, pruning or trimming of the branch is a necessary process.

God’s plan for us is that we produce much fruit. He sends His Holy Spirit to justify us, indwell us, and sanctify us in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 6:11). To be sanctified means to be separated from sin and set apart unto God, conformed into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). Pruning of the branches refers to sanctification. Second Thessalonians 2:13 records, “God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.”

Why is the pruning process necessary? When a person expresses true faith in Jesus as Savior and is born again of the Spirit, this does not mean that he is instantly perfect. A Christian begins the process of being changed into the Christlike nature. This takes place as the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, begins to trim away those attitudes and behaviors which are not like Christ. The Christian progressively shows increased signs of fruit-bearing in his spiritual life, much as the branch progressively shows signs of bearing fruit long before the fruit reaches a mature state. Spiritual pruning develops greater evidence of the nature of Christ, bringing one to spiritual maturity.

## Application

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**8** The following statements make a personal application of the principles taught by Jesus in the illustration of the vine and the branches. Circle the letter in front of the TRUE statements that correctly apply these principles.

- a) If I allow the Holy Spirit to produce spiritual fruit in me, this means that my attitudes will become like those of Jesus.
- b) Jesus taught that it is normal for a vine to produce both good and bad fruit; in other words, some of my attitudes will be like Jesus, and others will be the works of the flesh.
- c) If I want to be a branch that bears much good fruit, I must be willing to be pruned, or sanctified, by the Holy Spirit.
- d) I can by my own efforts produce the kind of fruit Jesus wants me to produce.
- e) If I fail to produce spiritual fruit, this may indicate that I am not attached to the vine.
- f) The quality and quantity of spiritual fruit that I produce depends on the extent to which I allow the Holy Spirit to control my life.
- g) To be holy means that the character of Christ is seen in me.

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## Conditions for Fruit-Bearing

**Objective 4.** *Indicate conditions for fruit-bearing.*

As we look at the teaching given in John 15 we see that there are at least three conditions for a plentiful harvest of spiritual fruit: 1) pruning by the Father; 2) remaining in Christ; and 3) Christ remaining in us.

1. Pruning by the Father. As we have already seen, pruning, or trimming, is necessary if we are to produce the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit actually deals with us about sin even before we are saved. He convicts us of it, creates in us a desire to turn from it, and produces in us godly sorrow and repentance which lead to salvation. (See Acts 2:37 for an example of this.) Once we are saved the Spirit continues to convict us of those

parts of our lives which are unlike Christ, purifying us and making us holy (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 12:10–14). In a Christian's life, the discipline of pruning is accomplished by the Father through circumstances and influences that bring a growing maturity and dependence on the Lord. Hebrews 12:5–6 reveals that the discipline or correction of the Lord shows that we belong to Him:

My Son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.

### ***Application***

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**9** Read Romans 5:3–4. What are the three positive results of the discipline of suffering?

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The need for pruning or trimming clean is stated in James 1:2–4:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.


## **Application**

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**10** Read 1 Peter 1:6–8. What purpose is given here for the grief we suffer in all kinds of trials?

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2. Remaining in Christ. Jesus used the phrase “remain in” when He described the relationship between Himself and His followers. He said, “Remain in me, and I will remain in you” (John 15:4).

The first phrase, “Remain in me,” concerns our position in Christ. In the Amplified Version of the New Testament 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether).” The word ingrafted means to be attached, to become a part of. Thus to remain in Christ speaks of our unity and fellowship with Him as described in Ephesians 2:6: “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.” This means that Christ is now in heaven, and those who are saved are in Him there in position or standing. In meditating on this important word in, we reach the conclusion that where we are is all-important. We must be in Christ as the branch must be in the vine. This ingrafting or attaching of the believer’s life to Christ is the basis by which the life of the believer becomes fruitful.

Paul, the great apostle, teacher, and preacher, the man who held two citizenships and was highly educated, considered his position in Christ as the most important thing in his life. Above all else, he wanted to be found “in Christ” (see Philippians 3:8–9). Paul is an excellent example of the transformed life which yields the fruit of the Christlike nature. Evidence of his fruitful union with Christ is seen in the effects of his ministry and writings. Paul’s life, even today, continues to influence the lives and beliefs of Christians around the world.

3. Christ remaining in me. The second phrase, “I will remain in you,” has to do with my fruitfulness or Christ-likeness here on earth. It relates to my daily life, in which I manifest the moral perfection of the character of Christ by the power of the Spirit. It is the holiness of Christ shining before the world through my life.

Gardeners know the importance of having an abundant source of the life of the vine flowing into the fruit. Bigger and better fruit is produced when the fruit receives and retains the life resources of the vine. The indwelling life of Christ changes the nature of the believer as that life resource remains in him.

Note in 1 Corinthians 1:2 and Philippians 1:1 that the saints are in Christ but also in Corinth and in Philippi. The Christian life has always been this way—the Christian is in Christ, but he also lives in the world. He reveals Christ to the world through his daily life. This means that Christ must live in the Christian. We read in 1 John 2:6 that “Whoever claims to live in him [Christ] must walk as Jesus did.” Walking as Jesus did is possible only through the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is the life-giving sap of the vine which keeps the branches alive and makes them fruitful. In the same way, it is our risen Savior alone who sustains us by His indwelling presence and through the Holy Spirit causes us to live a consistent and fruitful Christian life.

Do you recall the last request Jesus made of the Father in His prayer recorded in John 17? It was that He himself would be in us (John 17:26). Any attempt we make to imitate Christ’s life by our own efforts will result in utter failure. A fruitful life is possible only through this interdependent relationship: the Christian IN Christ; Christ IN the Christian.

## Application

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**11** Match the condition named for fruit-bearing (right) to each example or description of it (left).

- |              |  |   |
|--------------|--|---|
| ... <b>a</b> | We have a position of union with Christ in heaven.                       | 1) Pruning by the Father<br>2) Remaining in Christ<br>3) Christ remaining in us |
| ... <b>b</b> | The Spirit trims away wrong attitudes or behavior through discipline.    |   |
| ... <b>c</b> | We manifest or show forth the life of Christ on earth.                   |   |
| ... <b>d</b> | We experience the correction of the Lord through trials.                 |   |
| ... <b>e</b> | We receive lifegiving resources which make growth and maturity possible. |   |



## FRUIT REQUIRED

**Objective 5.** *State why fruit-bearing is required of Christians.*

### The Necessity of Bearing Spiritual Fruit

In Matthew 7:15–23 we have some striking sayings from the lips of our Savior about the necessity of producing Christian character. False prophets, He said, would be recognized by the kind of fruit they produce:

“Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (vv. 16–19)

Jesus went on to say that there would even be those who cast out demons in His name whom He never knew (vv. 22–23). How is this possible? The answer is given in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, “in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders.” This Scripture declares that it is possible for miracles and gifts of the Spirit to be imitated by Satan. But a man’s true relationship to Christ can be known by observing whether the fruit of the Spirit or the works of the flesh are produced in his character (Matthew 7:17–18, 1 John 4:8). Christian character cannot be imitated. It is the natural result of Christ revealing His holy character in and through us.

### Application

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**12** It is possible for someone to cast out demons in the name of Jesus when they are not in Him and He is not in them because

.....

**13** In what way can you know that a person is in Christ?

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## The Purpose of Spiritual Fruit-bearing

In considering the purpose for spiritual fruit-bearing, we will look at three aspects, which have to do with expression, discipleship, and glory.

1. Fruit-bearing is an expression of the life of Christ. Every fruit is an expression of the life of the plant from which it comes. In the same way, as members of Christ’s body, there should naturally be an expression of the full beauty of the character of Christ in us.

For what purpose do you exist? Has God saved you just so you will sit in a church building for a few hours each week? No! You exist to live out the teaching you receive, to reveal

Christ to this sinful and lost world. People need to see Him through the lives of Christians. When they take notice of our profession to be Christians, we may become the only Bible that many of them will ever “read.”

A life given to Christ expresses to others the kind of love He has for them. When I am an expression of Christ, my ears will hear their cries, my eyes will see their needs, my feet will take me to help them, and my hands will reach out to care for them. In this way I will become a channel of the life of Christ. He will minister to them through me. Are you a channel of the life of Christ? Does He minister to others through you?

2. Fruit-bearing is an evidence of discipleship. Jesus said that we should bear “much fruit,” thus showing that we are His disciples (John 15:8). He pointed out that every student who has been fully trained is like his teacher (Luke 6:40). This means that it is not enough simply to accept Him so that you can say, “See, I am a Christian!” He wants you to bear much fruit. If you do this, it is proof that you have truly learned of Him, that you are His disciple. It shows that you have taken steps beyond the first one of being born again and receiving Christ. It demonstrates that Christ really is the Lord of your life.

3. Fruit-bearing blesses other people. First it blesses those who receive benefit from the manifestation of Christ’s character in your life, and it also blesses fellow believers who observe spiritual fruit in you.

4. Fruit-bearing brings glory to God. Jesus said, ““This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit”” (John 15:8). Bearing spiritual fruit is the result of the abundant life. When you allow the life of Christ to be expressed through you, people will see the effects it produces and will give praise to God (Matthew 5:16).



## Application

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- 14** Fruit-bearing is required to
- a)** give evidence of discipleship.
  - b)** accept Jesus as Savior.
  - c)** cast out demons.
  - d)** glorify God.
  - e)** be a church member.
  - f)** express to others the love of Christ.
  - g)** demonstrate your relationship to Jesus Christ.
  - h)** be a blessing to others.
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## FRUIT REALIZED

### A Plentiful Harvest

**Objective 6.** *Describe ways you can promote spiritual fruit-bearing in your own life.*

Fruit-bearing plants must be properly cared for if you want them to produce a good yield of fruit. The same principle is true in the spiritual life. Let us look at some ways you can help to realize a plentiful harvest of spiritual fruit in your life. After you have received the Holy Spirit as your constant Companion, you must cooperate with Him so that He can produce fruit in you. There are several ways you can do this.

1. Cultivate fellowship with God. To cultivate means to encourage, to prepare for growth. Long before the first blossoms appear or the initial signs of the fruit are seen, much has been done to prepare the plant for the expected fruit. The gardener carefully tends the plant so that it will be more productive. This tender, caring process is cultivation. It is in our relationship with God, through continuous fellowship, that our lives are changed and developed toward fruition.

As a child of God, you enjoy blessed fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 1:3). You can cultivate this

fellowship by spending time with God in communion and prayer. You can also cultivate it by obeying His Word. When Jesus taught His disciples about spiritual fruit, He told them to let His words remain in them (John 15:7). He also said that they would remain in His love as they continued to obey His commands, especially His command to love one another (John 15:9–10). Your obedience to God’s Word will bring the same results. You will experience the fellowship and love of God, and your life will be made fruitful because of your relationship with Him.

2. Seek to have fellowship with other Christians. A gardener usually finds it desirable to have plants grouped according to the fruit each produces: All of the orange trees will be planted together, all of the corn will be together in one field, and so forth. This aids cultivation and the reaping of the harvest. Through fellowship with other Christians you can be encouraged to live the Christian life, and you can encourage others. The first Christians had fellowship with each other every day (Acts 2:46). It is no wonder their lives were powerful testimonies for the gospel and made those around them thirsty for salvation. There was a daily harvest of souls as the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:46–47).

3. Accept the ministry of godly leaders. God uses leaders to feed and nourish His people. Ephesians 4:11–13 emphasizes that the purpose of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers in the church is to build up God’s people so that they will become mature. The same truth is expressed in 1 Corinthians 3:6, where the apostle Paul spoke of the different roles he and Apollos had in helping the Corinthians: “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.” As you accept and apply the teachings God gives through leaders He has called, you are brought into a place of greater fruitfulness.

4. Exercise watchfulness and protection. There are always dangers which threaten a plant. A healthy plant is better able to protect itself from these dangers and to respond to the watchfulness of the gardener. The Christian needs to watch for those things which can destroy his spiritual life. Bad habits,

wrong attitudes and associations, destructive thoughts and wrong desires should all be considered as threats to spiritual development.

When the people of Israel entered the Promised Land they were to destroy the wicked nations who lived there. That was God’s plan, but Israel did not do this. As a result, the Israelites were drawn into the wicked ways of those nations (Psalm 106:34–36). Their experience is a warning to us. We must be careful that we do not permit ungodly habits and attitudes to remain or be formed in our lives. Hebrews 12:15 warns us not to allow any bitter root (bitterness, hatred) to grow up. Like the thorns Jesus described in the parable of the sower (Luke 8:14), bad habits and attitudes can prevent you from becoming the kind of person God wants you to be.

You also need to be aware that Satan will try to oppose you and keep you from surrendering to the Holy Spirit. He does not want you to make Christ the supreme and only Master of your life.

**Application**

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**15** What advice does 1 Peter 5:8–9 give you? To be .....  
..... and ....., and .....  
the devil.

**16** What happens if you do resist the devil (James 4:7)?  
.....

**17** In your notebook, list the four ways of promoting spiritual fruit-bearing which you have just studied. Beside each one, name something specific you can do in order to put it into practice in your life. For example, next to Fellowship with God you might write something like “Spend more time each day in prayer, worship, and reading the Bible.”



## A Most Excellent Way

**Objective 7.** *Summarize the apostle Paul's teaching concerning the desired relationship between spiritual fruit and spiritual gifts.*

It is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between real and imitation fruit. The imitation fruit can give the impression of being real, but if you try to eat it, immediately you know that it is not real.

The same analogy may be made of Christians. On the surface it may be difficult to distinguish between a person who truly is like Christ and one who merely has an outward appearance of a Christian. They may display similar behaviors such as a manifestation of spiritual gifts, but the true test comes as the inward character of the individual is expressed in his everyday life. Jesus said that true disciples of His are known by the quality of love they express towards each other.

The fruit of the Spirit is so very important in our lives! The Christians who lived in Corinth at the time the New Testament was written exercised nine gifts of the Spirit—they spoke with tongues, they prophesied, they performed miracles. However, they lacked the fruit of the same Spirit—they competed with one another in their local assembly (1 Corinthians 11:17–18); they went to court and sued each other in front of non-Christians (1 Corinthians 6:1–8). Some lived in immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1–2). Some even ate of the Lord's Supper while they were drunk (1 Corinthians 11:20–21). In writing to them, the apostle Paul was very patient and loving. He wanted them to know the empowering Spirit, who gave them gifts to build up the church. But more than that, he wanted them to know the sanctifying Spirit who could change their character and make them like Jesus.

Paul encouraged the Corinthians to desire eagerly the gifts of the Spirit, but he concluded by saying, “And now I will show you the most excellent way” (1 Corinthians 12:31). The “most excellent way” is love—God's love as it is expressed and described in 1 Corinthians 13. There we read that the gifts

will cease someday, but that love will continue and remain (vv. 8–10, 13).

Light is made up of the blending of the seven colors of the rainbow, but it is one light. In a similar way, the fruit of the Spirit is made up of several qualities of character—yet it is one fruit. This is in contrast to the gifts of the Spirit. There are several spiritual gifts, and the Holy Spirit gives them to individuals according to His sovereign will. One person receives a certain gift, and another receives a different one (1 Corinthians 12:7–11). But the fruit of the Spirit cannot be separated—it is one product, one thing. It can be summed up in the word love. Just as an orange is covered over and protected by an outer skin, love is the unifying dimension of spiritual fruit.

### ***Application***

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**18** Circle the letter preceding TRUE statements which summarize what the apostle Paul taught concerning the desired relationship between spiritual fruit and spiritual gifts.

- a)** Spiritual gifts are more important than spiritual fruit.
- b)** There should be one spiritual fruit for each spiritual gift manifested.
- c)** The manifestation of spiritual gifts is more effective when accompanied by the expression of Christ-likeness in daily life.
- d)** Showing love is of greater importance than exercising spiritual gifts.
- e)** Fruit will cease, but the effects of the gifts will remain.
- f)** The empowering of the Spirit should precede the sanctifying of the Spirit.
- g)** Gifts are an outward manifestation, while fruit is an inward quality of character.



In our next lesson we will examine the spiritual meaning of the word love and in succeeding lessons we will look at the other eight qualities of Christian character that make up the fruit of the Spirit. May the Lord bless you as you continue your study.

**self-test**

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Take the self-test, and check your answers with those at the back of this study guide. Review any items you answer incorrectly.

TRUE-FALSE. Write T in the blank space if the statement is TRUE, and write F if it is FALSE.

- ... **1** The principle of fruit-bearing is that each seed produces fruit of various kinds.
- ... **2** A bad tree can produce good fruit.
- ... **3** The Bible speaks of Christian character as gifts of the Spirit.
- ... **4** Although the Holy Spirit produces spiritual fruit in the believer, He cannot do so without the believer's cooperation.
- ... **5** The secret to winning the conflict with the sinful nature is to walk in the Spirit.
- ... **6** Jesus said that false prophets would be recognized by their fruits.
- ... **7** Though there are different aspects of the fruit of the Spirit, there is really only one fruit.
- ... **8** The apostle Paul was pleased with the Christians in Corinth because they were producing both the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit.
- ... **9** Remaining in Christ has to do with our position in Him.
- ... **10** The watchfulness a Christian needs to exercise in cultivating the qualities of Christian character includes resisting the devil.
- ... **11** The two lists in Galatians 5 support the principle that seed produces fruit after its kind.
- ... **12** Jesus pictured the relationship that should exist between Himself and the believer as similar to that which exists between the flesh and the Spirit.

**13** MATCHING. Match each statement below with the title it describes.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>... <b>a</b> Spiritual fruit-bearing is the expression of the life of Christ in us. It shows that we have truly become His disciples and that He is Lord of our lives. It also brings glory to God.</p>                       | <p>1) Ways to promote spiritual fruitbearing</p> |
| <p>... <b>b</b> Spiritual fruit-bearing comes only if the interdependent relationship of Christ in the Christian and the Christian in Christ exists. The Christian must also accept the discipline or pruning of the Father.</p> | <p>2) The purpose for fruit-bearing</p>          |
| <p>... <b>c</b> The Christian needs to have fellowship with God and with other Christians. He also needs to accept and apply the teachings he receives through the ministry of godly leaders.</p>                                | <p>3) Conditions for fruit-bearing</p>           |

SHORT ANSWER. Answer the following questions briefly.

**14** What is another term for fruit of the Spirit?

.....

**15** List the ninefold fruit of the Spirit given in Galatians 5:22–23.

.....

.....

**16** How can we show that we are disciples of Jesus?

.....



## **answers to study questions**

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**10** So that our faith may be proved genuine and bring glory to Jesus Christ.

**1 c)** An orange tree produces oranges.

**11 a)** 2) Remaining in Christ.

**b)** 1) Pruning by the Father.

**c)** 3) Christ remaining in us.

**d)** 1) Pruning by the Father.

**e)** 3) Christ remaining in us.

### **2 Works of the Flesh**

Sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

### **Fruit of the Spirit**

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

**12** miracles and gifts of the Spirit can be imitated.

### **3 Works of the Flesh**

Evil, greed, depravity, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, boastful, disobedient to parents, senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Cursing, bitterness, evil thoughts, theft, adultery, lewdness, folly. Falsehood, unwholesome talk, brawling, malice.

**13** You know he is in Christ if he has Christian character, which is the fruit of the Spirit. (Other evidences: his actions, words, and deeds, and the Spirit in which these behaviors are expressed.)

#### 4 Fruit of the Spirit

Not envious, not boastful, not proud, not rude, not self-seeking, not easily angered. Truthful, protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres. Faith, knowledge, godliness.

14 **a)** give evidence of discipleship.

**d)** glorify God.

**f)** express to others the love of Christ.

**g)** demonstrate your relationship to Jesus Christ.

**h)** be a blessing to others.

5 **a)** works (or acts); flesh (sinful nature).

**b)** fruit, Spirit; led

**c)** character.

15 self-controlled, alert, resist

6 **a)** fruit of opposite character to what was expected.

16 He will flee from you (he will leave you alone).

7 **b)** no longer protected by God.

17 Your answer.

8 All but **b)** and **d)** are true.

18 **a)** False

**b)** False (There is only one fruit.)

**c)** True

**d)** True

**e)** False

**f)** False

**g)** True

9 Perseverance (this means faithfulness, remaining firm, steadfast); character; hope.