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## **Fruit of the Spirit Devotions**

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This is designed for church student ministries, personal, family devotions and sermon tie-ins.

**The Fruit of the Spirit is God's love for you that is flowing into and then out of you!**

**Key Passages you can use:** Habakkuk 2:4; John 14, 15; Romans 5:1-5; 12:1-21; 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40; Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 4:1-6:20; Philippians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:3-9

*But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin. Micah 3:8*

**What does a Christian look like? What should a Christian look like?** It is the essential mechanism God uses to grow us and then empower and use us in the lives of others. This *Fruit* making and giving is the power God gives us to “*walk with Him*,” as to know Him, build our faith, have great temperament, build a wonderful church and even be a good witness.

### **Youth Talks and Sermon tie-ins or Family Devotions:**

#### **How can I grow in The Fruit of the Spirit?**

Look over the first part of this series and read the descriptions of the Fruits, *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*, or any of the sixty-plus godly characteristics on the list that He calls us to emulate and put into our relationships. These are essential to growing a healthy and lasting relationship. You can examine the descriptions, look up the Scriptures, read the definitions below, and then ask yourself, family or group these six questions:

1. Is this Fruit working in me?
2. How do I now exhibit this Fruit in my daily life?
3. How can I use this Fruit to develop a better willingness to respond to others- especially to the ones I love-with a sense of awe and fear of God, and respect for people?
4. What blocks this Fruit from working and being exhibited in me?
5. How can I make this Fruit function better, stronger, and faster, even in times of uncertainly and stress?
6. Think through the steps you would take to put this Fruit into action in a specific instance, or, to improve it. Consider the examples of the passages in God's Word.

Do not forget to be in prayer during all of this. Have someone you trust hold you accountable or get in a small group to learn and practice.

## **Introduction**

The Christian life can be a difficult journey! We live in a fallen world corrupted by sin. Consequently, all that we do is imperfect and a struggle. We make choices that affect the direction in which we proceed in life and in relationships. In so doing, we affect others around us in both positive and negative ways. Yet, when our efforts and motivations are centered upon being righteous, we will be doing as we are called to do, and even be blessed for it.

### **As Christ's disciples, we must be willing to be led by the truth of His Word and by our faith and trust in Him.**

Because faith is also in community and mutual, we each partake in Christ and need one another to grow further in our pilgrimage of Christian living. This is what your church needs to be about! In so doing, we share Christ and therefore proclaim Him, to those who do not know Him. To be a good church, we are called to glorify Christ in all that we do! In this manner, as both a global Church and a local church, we must also demonstrate His love in how we relate to others. And know this: everything that is worthy and excellent requires more work, from painting a house to preaching the Word. This journey of difficulty should not discourage us because it will build us up to be much better, stronger, and of greater use to God as we put into practice what He puts in us (Phil. 2:12-13).

So, enjoy it! See it as an adventure from which to learn and grow. Our character will improve and enable us to overcome all obstacles and help others through them. Thus, we should make it a point to give Him our best for His glory because He first loved us, and we respond to His Grace with our gratitude. At the same time, we can take comfort in the fact that He will not give us anything we cannot handle (Phil 2:10-13; Heb. 2:10)! So, let us live with excellence, to our best for His glory!

Your Christian "fruit salad" is predicated on how you perceive your life as well as how you receive and perceive our Lord. Life is not about our wants, needs, and comfort; it is about Christ works in us both powerful and triumphant. The key is for us to turn on this engine of our spiritual formation by our willingness to pursue, endure, and grow so the Holy Spirit and His Fruit can flow. We have to want our Lord's empowerment to desire His Fruit, and we have to want to give it away to others. Allow the holiness of our Lord, His grace, His patience, understanding, faith, loyalty, goodness, and love to be exhibited in you-not by mere imitation, but with genuine gratitude and submission, kept by His power (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:27; Gal. 5).

**God does indeed give us what we need to succeed.**

We can have the faith to remain in Him regardless of what is going on outside of ourselves or the feelings we experience on the inside. He will give us all we need; He will water, cultivate, and harvest, and also gives us the mercy and tenderness to go on. We must allow our faith to build so it does not bring us down or motivate others negatively. Remember, the great hope is still to come.

*Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Gal. 5:25*

## **Fruit Definition Devotions!**

### **How many Fruit(s) of the Spirit are there?**

Is it "Fruit" of the Spirit or is it "Fruits" of the Spirit?

There are nine or more fruits, so it must be a plural? Yes and no; in the Greek language, it is referred to as "singular," meaning one Fruit. In classic Reformed and Evangelical theology, it is listed as both (*Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* the definitive work and many other references too), but the singular is the more correct way to refer to it. Then there is the number; is it nine, twelve, or more? Catholics add modesty, continence, and chastity, which they get from the Latin *Vulgate* translation.

Then 2 Peter 1 gives a slightly different listing. Basically, most biblical theologians look to the Galatians nine and the others, more than seventy total, are referred to as virtues or "characters." Let us first take a quick look at the main nine Fruit(s) of the Spirit that flow from God's work and love working in us. These all flow from love and cooperate as one in one another (Galatians 5:22-23):

**Love** will enable us to appreciate our brothers and sisters in the Lord and, of course, our family and others around us.

Love is taking the initiative to build up and meet the needs of others, without expecting anything in return. We must allow *love* to be the foundation of our relationships-the love of our Lord that He gives us. Love manifests patience and kindness and it is not greedy or jealous; it is not prideful nor brags of one's accomplishments. It is not rude or self-seeking, and it allows one not to be easily angered. By this, we do not keep record of others wrongs or enjoy it when bad things happen to others; rather, we rejoice with others to build them up. Love always looks after others, shows trust, hope, and always carries on. Love encapsulates the purpose and role of Fruit, and thus, our furthestmost goal, as followers of Christ, is to do all things in love (John 13:1; 15:13; 1 Corinthians 13:3-8; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 John 4:16).

1. Is this Fruit working in me?
2. How do I now exhibit this Fruit in my daily life?

3. How can I use this Fruit to develop a better willingness to respond to others- especially to the ones I love-with a sense of awe and fear of God, and respect for people?
4. What blocks this Fruit from working and being exhibited in me?
5. How can I make this Fruit function better, stronger, and faster, even in times of uncertainly and stress?
6. Think through the steps you would take to put this Fruit into action in a specific instance, or, to improve it. Consider the examples of the passages in God's Word.

**Joy** is our focus on Christ as Lord; this allows us to enjoy our relationship with Him, His creation, and others, regardless of our circumstances.

Joy is an expression of delight and real, authentic happiness that comes from and with harmony with God and others. *Joy* in James refers to declaring our situation as happy and fulfilling, even when it is not. It is to change our mindset and focus. It is realizing the sovereignty of God and that He is in control, even when life seems to be turned upside down and inside out! Joy helps us understand God's perspective and gives us the confidence and patience to endure anything. Joy is not happiness, because we may not be content and pleased with it; rather, joy is hope. It is our real hope. It is not a meager wish; rather, it is the unshakable confidence of our future in Christ. Our pleasure comes from knowing He is in charge and caring for us (Psalm 32:7-9; 34:1-8; Proverbs 15:13; John 15:11; 17:13; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Thess. 5:18; 1 Peter 4:13-19; Hebrews 10:34; 12:2; James 1:1-4)!

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**Peace** is surrendering and yielding ourselves to the Lord to be in His control, for He is our ultimate peace!

In so doing, tranquility will be our tone, control, and our composure. This will be fueled from our harmonious relationship with God-handing over control of our hearts, will, and minds to Him. We are willing to make peace with others because we have found peace with God. Thus, we can live at peace with our neighbors, proclaiming serenity and

rekindling it when it goes down or is lost. Peace is unity, which is more important than just resolving trivial disagreements. Our focus must be on edifying and encouraging- such things, unfortunately, rare in the church today! We will either lift people up or bring them down, something we need to know so as to pursue peace and harmony and not let the childish and petty things of life divide us. Our focus must be on keeping our own accounts straight and not worrying or interfering with others. This helps make us peacemakers. Once we make real peace with God, we will be able to make and maintain peace with others. When we are at peace with God, we need to be at peace with ourselves emotionally, and others relationally (Isaiah. 26:3; Matthew 5:9; Luke 19:42; John 14:27; 16:33; Romans 5:1; 12:18; Galatians 5:22-23; Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:7).

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**Patience**, in some translations is *called long-suffering or forbearance*; this calls for showing tolerance and fortitude toward others, even accepting difficult situations with them-and God-without making demands or conditions.

Patience is our "staying power." It is like perseverance and the endurance to not give up; it is about actively overcoming our situation-not just sitting, accepting, and doing nothing! It allows us to endure a less than desirable situation, to make us better, more useful, and even optimistic and prudent. Hence, its other name, *long-suffering*. It allows us to put up with others who "get on our nerves" without losing other characteristics of grace (Hosea 2:19-23; Psalm 33:20; Matthew 27:14; Romans 5:3; 12:12; Galatians 5:1; 5:22-23; Colossians 1:11; James 1:3-4,12; 5:10-11).

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**Kindness** is the medium through which Christ's love becomes real, tangible, and knowable through us.

It is the application of sincere love that manifests itself in practicing benevolence and a loving attitude towards others. Kindness is the essence that shows the world we are Christians, like the fragrance coming from a beautiful flower. It is being convicted by God's Word, and then modeling it to others. Being charitable is an aspect of good positive relationships with others, and a "MUST" part of the Christian experience and duty! Kindness is the subject to the object of who we are in Christ. This is something we replicate as we are kind, and also respond in kindness to others, our response to one another fuels the other's response, and so forth. In this way, we will be escalating love and kindness instead of repression and dysfunction (Romans 2:1-4; 12:9-21; 2 Corinthians 6:6-7; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-14; 1 John 3:16-23)!

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**Goodness** is the engagement of love that shows the application of Christ, His righteousness, and Truth.

This models it to others in the action of love, making Christ and us attractive and inviting. This is God at work in our faith, so we are synergized with His power and then engage it to others. This is the fruit that makes people, liked by and even lovable to others. This displays integrity, honesty, and compassion to others, and allows us to do the right thing. It is doing the right thing, even when it does not feel like we should, as Joseph did. He was betrayed and sold as a slave, yet, he chose to make his situation into something good, and to help and treat others better than he needed to. Why are we to be good? Because God is good to us (Psalm 86:5; 145:4-13)! Goodness is the model for people to repent and accept Christ (Amos 5:15; Proverbs 25:22; Matthew 19:16;

Romans 12:17; Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 5:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 1 Peter 3:11; 2 Peter 1:3-8).

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**Faithfulness** is the application of our faith in action; because we are saved by Christ, He dwells in our hearts.

Thus, we are infused with dependability because as we praise His name, it hits home in our being. It is not faith itself; rather, it is the fruit and character of faith. It is the "gluing" fruit that will preserve our faith and the other characters of the Spirit, and identify God's will, so we can be dependable and trusting to God and others. Faith is the one fruit that we give back to God, whereas faithfulness and the other fruits, virtues, and characters are from the Spirit working in us! Faithfulness is authenticity that is so absent today and so badly needed to show the power and motivation for Christian living. Because God is trustworthy with us, we can be faith-worthy in Him (Psalm 119: 89-90; Isaiah 25:1; Matthew 17:19; 25:21; Romans 1:17; 5:1-2; 1 Corinthians 12:9; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 3:16-17; Hebrews 11:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:24)!

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**Gentleness**, sometimes referred to as *Meekness*, is the fruit that will show calmness, personal care, and tenderness in meeting the needs of others.

It is to be more than just a personality; it is to be who we are by the work of the Spirit within us. This is not a weakness or a lack of strength; rather, it is being humble and gentle toward God and others. This also means being nonresistant to God and His work in us. Gentleness produces a desire and effort to please God and to submit our will and aspirations to His will and what is best. By keeping our focus on Christ with humility, we can endure being personally attacked (Psalm 37:11; Isaiah. 40:11; 42:2-3; Galatians 5:22-23; Philippians 4: 5; Matthew 5:5; 11:29; 12:15; Ephesians 4:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:24; 1 Thessalonians 2:7).

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**Self-Control**, sometimes referred to as *Temperance*, is allowing God to be in control of our will and hearts, and to be diligent in seeking the Spirit to enable us.

We can know what not to do, and guard the areas in which we are weak. This will allow us to have discipline and restraint, with obedience to God and others. It is not allowing distractions to derail or remove us from His will and plan, so we will not be held back from what Christ has called us to do. This comes down to how we trust in our Lord, we can trust God for the future because we can see what He has done in the past (Proverbs 16:32; 25:28; Romans 13: 12-14; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 9:25-27; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Thessalonians 5: 22; Titus 2:12; Hebrews 12:2; 2 Peter 1:5-7).

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## Applications and Conclusions

We are called to *Put on* this, a call to take on the character of Jesus and put it on us, while we put off the vices that hinder us. Don't worry that we cannot do this on our own; He imparts to us the power and ability to do so through His work and the Spirit! It is something we do not force to come about; rather it happens naturally as we learn and grow in Christ, then His character envelopes us as we take on the new identity of a person not only saved by grace but empowered and shaped by Him. If we just live our lives with the attitude of how things affect "me" and not "others," then we are living "with" the devil, and not "with" God! It is essential as Christians to demonstrate His love in how we relate to both for God and then to others (Romans 13:11-14; Ephesians 4:1-6, 22-24; Philippians 2:1-6).

### How is this done?

Simply put, by Paul, we achieve this by allowing the Word of Christ and His presence to dwell in us, and learn His instruction, so the peace of Christ rules our hearts and minds, translating into actions. It is all about our spiritual growth impacting us so it impacts others positively and in love (Col. 1:15; 2:3; 3:1-11)!

Take a close look at each of the fruits listed. Which ones are you exhibiting well? Which ones do you lack? What are you going to do about the ones in which you are weak? We are called not to be *ineffective* or *unproductive*; this means we are being called to be productive and useful in the Kingdom as well as the community. If not, we are in disobedience and ignoring of His love and gifts for us. Why would a Christian not want to be productive for the Kingdom (Phil. 4:8-9)?

### Extras for Youth:

**Object Lesson:** Do you know the difference between an exclamation point and a question mark? Did you know we can be either? Like if we are a question mark we will be like doubting our relationship with Jesus or feeling bad about ourselves or what can you think of....? Or we can be an exclamation point, confident, faithful that Jesus loves me and has a purpose and a plan for me and that includes to be faithful to Him and others.

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 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. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. John 15:1-4*

Fruit of the Spirit, how we would live out our Christian lives. It all comes down to our willingness to either live a life that is led by the Spirit or one that is led by our flesh.

Your Christian "fruit salad" is predicated on how you perceive your life as well as how you receive and perceive our Lord.

### **We have to get rid of the mess that is messing us up!**

To make us pure, He needs to prune and refine us, get us to come away from ourselves, move us from our fears and frustrations so we can embark on our victorious Christian life. We have to master what hinders us-the sin and past hurts that infect us-so they can be dealt with and placed under control along with the apathy and complacency we settle into. If we do not master what hinders us, it will master us; however, in Christ, we can master it and add it to our arsenal of learning and growth.

In this way, Fruit can fill us up and spill over to others around us. This is not something we need to fear; it is not drudgery, but an opportunity to be more than we could ever be on our own. Our growth in Him means faith, spiritual maturity, and character development. These things are more precious than any gold, personal success, or financial portfolio. As we go through the tough stuff of life, we will grow and become stronger. We will worship Him more profoundly and purely. We will honor Him more strongly, more relevantly, and touch the lives of others more deeply, too.

**For more about the Fruit of the Spirit and for High School and adults see *Into Thy Word*,**

<http://www.intothyword.org/pages.asp?pageid=56858>

<http://www.intothyword.org/pages.asp?pageid=121173>

#### **More Ideas:**

<http://www.kidsofintegrity.com/>

<http://www.calvarymv.com/childrensresources/childrensministry/topical-teachings/FruitOfSpirit/>

<http://www.mssscrafts.com>

<http://www.biblefunforkids.com/2013/04/fruit-of-spirit.html>

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