

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

A Life Changed by Jesus

WEEK TWO: Galatians 5:16-26

The Fruit of the Spirit: A Brief Introduction

This term we will be focusing on what a life changed by Jesus looks like using the metaphor of the fruit of the Spirit. This common biblical metaphor describes the outcomes of a life lived with God; the virtues and characteristics that out to be the harvest of our lives.

Our central text will be Galatians 5:16-23 but we'll also incorporate other texts that reflect on fruitfulness.

Sermon Outline:

A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

Key Text(s): Galatians 5:16-26

It should not be all that surprising that the Holy Spirit has a part to play in producing the fruit of the Spirit! The question is, What can we say about the Spirit's work in our transforming our lives?

In general the work of the Spirit is to produce the fruit of a life changed by Jesus and marked by his character and joining in his redemptive work in the world.

Scripture attributes several specific aspects to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. For example, the Spirit is a seal, marking those who believe (Ephesians 1:13-14). This reflects the ancient practice of marking those things that one owned; a bit like how cattle might be branded. The presence of the Holy Spirit identifies us as belonging to God. The Spirit is also the source of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4) which are given to the church to resource the church to participate in God's work. The Spirit also intercedes for us (Romans 8:26-27). Like a lawyer who speaks on behalf of their client, the Spirit speaks to the Father on ours. Similarly, the Spirit is the advocate (John 14:16), sent to guide us to be like Jesus. Finally (in this non-comprehensive list) is the Spirit's role in convicting us of sin (John 16:8). If one outcome of sin in our lives is to keep us from living the life God has in store for us (tied in with his purposes in the world, not just our desires), then sin must be continually confronted in our lives. The Spirit sheds light and truth on those parts of our lives that are not aligned to a life with God and, in combination with the other aspects of the Spirit's work, urges us to rely on God's grace and continue to be transformed into the likeness of Christ.

Each of these contribute to our ongoing fruitfulness – and the change from a fruitless life to a fruitful one. If this is the case, what is our part in fruitfulness? It is the Spirit's fruit, our task is to be faithful. In the passage we are basing this series on Paul uses the image of keeping in step with the Spirit; matching his rhythm and pace in our lives. How can we do this?

There are several things we can do to keep in step with the Spirit. We can turn our eyes to Jesus – the one to whom the Spirit points – through spiritual practices (e.g., prayer, reading and reflecting on Scripture). We can make repentance a regular practice; not to focus on our failures, but to focus on removing the obstacles we face in our quest to follow Jesus. We can carefully consider what we are looking for in our lives. We are seeking fruitfulness not just busyness. We can also learn from fruitful people. Who in our lives might be a role model from whom we might learn?

This is an important lesson. Fruitfulness is not a solo-sport but something we do together in cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

Questions to Ask

1. Are there other aspects of the Holy Spirit's work, as revealed in Scripture, that you believe are important to our fruitfulness? How or why?
2. What does it mean to you to keep in step with the Spirit? What analogies can you think of in our day to day lives that might help us think about this?
3. How do we make repentance a "positive" discipline? (NOTE: It may be useful to begin by discussing how repentance can feel "negative"; shame, guilt, etc.)
4. Who is someone who demonstrates fruitfulness that you can learn from? What lessons have you learned from them?

A Prayer to Pray

Pray for each other and for our community of faith that the fruit of the Spirit might become more and more evident in our lives.

A Practice to Try

(Note: this is repeated from last week) Our "work" in producing fruit begins with remaining in Jesus or, as Paul puts it, keeping in step with the Spirit. One way we might remember to remain is through what is known as a breath prayer; a prayer that can be said in one breath. Consider a simple prayer such as, "Lord Jesus, remain in me, that I might bear much fruit." Or, "Holy Spirit, keep me in step with you, that I might bear much fruit." Or something similar. Seek to pray this breath prayer whenever you remember.

Readings to Read This Week

The following readings focus on the work of the Holy Spirit.

- John 14:15-31
- John 15:26-16:15
- Romans 8:1-17
- Romans 8:18-27
- 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

Our vision as a community of faith is to see lives changed by Jesus. In this series we want to consider what that really means – what does a life changed by Jesus look like?

A GBC Initiative to Promote/Celebrate

Each week we will provide you with a key aspect of our community news that we would encourage you to remind your Life Group about.

1. On Sunday we put out the first call for volunteers to take part in the Festival of Christmas. This included volunteers for the three days of the festival (Friday December 19-Sunday December 21) but also for the set up working bee on Saturday November 30. Please encourage your group to participate. You can find the sign up sheet link on Link Tree.