

Session 1

What Do You Produce?

*Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction;
whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life*

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Galatians 6:8

Reflection

I have a confession to make which could run the risk of causing you, the reader, to think that I am a generally wasteful person. That may not be a great idea to begin the first page of the first session with such a statement, since it's really easy to put the book away and run for the hills. Just stick with me a little longer. Here it goes. I can't eat a banana with dark spots on it. Literally. I will break the banana into pieces and eat only the parts with no bruises, throwing the rest in the trash. I know what you're thinking. "Those spots won't hurt you." "It actually tastes better because it's ripe." "Don't be a whiny baby." Okay, that one hurt a little. I just can't bring myself to do it. The spots completely turn me away from eating it. There. Whew. I feel better, but what does that have to do with the reason you picked up this study? Great question. Let's keep going.

Everyone produces fruit in your life. It's just not all good fruit. Even a life lived with complete devotion to self-interests and pursuit of money and power still produces fruit. It's just not the kind you would probably like to have. That's really the point of this study. It's to point you to the reality that your life, right now, is producing some kind of fruit which is affecting others, and alerting the world to what is really going on inside your life. Words are great, but actions tell the whole story. What kind of fruit is present in you? Is the kind that would make someone pass you over in the produce aisle or is it the kind that makes you attractive to others.

Attractiveness is one of those qualities that, as we'll discover in later sessions, has been distorted by our world. Our idea of attractiveness is tied to fickle beauty standards. Real attractiveness goes much deeper. Do your words and actions draw people in or repel them? I wish I could say that we as Christians are the most appealing of all people on earth, but that isn't always the case. Just put your finger here to hold your place and scroll through your favorite social media app. I'll wait. Back so soon? I don't blame you. The negativity and vitriol that's spewed out in the name of Jesus is tough to stomach. But, there is an antidote to the poison.

The Fruit of the Spirit. It sounds like one of those answers that's so easy that it seems made up or one that you give your kids when you don't really want to take the time to answer the question. This time is really the answer. Christians should be producing good fruit. Jesus said in Luke 6:44 (NIV), *"Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars."* A Christian by definition is a Christ-follower; thus, if the Christian isn't bearing fruit that matches Jesus then you have to wonder what kind of "tree" that person actually is. What kind of tree are you? Don't answer. Think about it. What does your daily life look like? What are your actions? What are your words? How did you treat that waiter at dinner when the food was late? What did you say about your boss when she left the room? Do you keep your word? All of these things are fruit that tell you what kind of tree you are.

There is good news, trust me. The good news is that you can grow good fruit. How? It's a two-pronged answer. First, look at the name: the Fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the agent who works in your life to grow this fruit. The first bit of good news is that you have help. You're not alone in trying to change direction or improve your fruit output. God didn't give us the idea of the Fruit of the Spirit to remind us of how bad we are, and rub our faces in failure. God gave us this concept to let us know that this is something we can experience. This is the goal. It's attainable.

Second, you have to make the choice. The Holy Spirit isn't into producing robots. He doesn't possess us and force us to show kindness or love. It's a partnership. Almost like a dance. Galatians 5:25 (NIV) says, *"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."* My wife and I once attended a dance class together. I grew up in such a conservative environment that I never actually learned how to dance, so I was a total newbie. I learned quickly that two people in step with each other can produce a beautiful dance. A true dance only works if one person takes the lead and the partner follows. There's only one leader in this dance we call the Christian life. Anytime we try to grab that role we are destined for disaster.

Buckle up because we're about to start the adventure of changing your life and the world around you. That's not exaggeration. All around you are people

who need the life-changing power of Jesus Christ to revive them. You are light pointing the way to Jesus. That light burns brightly when you produce the Fruit of the Spirit.

Session 1: Video Notes

Overview of Galatians

- Paul wrote to a group of churches located in the southern part of modern-day Turkey that he had planted during his first missionary journey found in Acts 13-14.

- Paul letters in the NT generally deal with some kind of difficult situation the church(es) is facing.
 - The new church was made up of people who came from different backgrounds who had to find a way to coexist as one people of God.

- Paul wanted the people to understand that unity in God isn't found in following the Old Testament rituals, unity is found in Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the unifying force that inhabits the people of God and binds them together as the people of God in spite of cultural, societal, or racial differences.

Works of the Flesh vs. Fruit of the Spirit

- The Works of the Flesh lead to disunity. These actions are called "flesh" because they embody the opposite attitude of the spirit-filled, Christ-centered life. The "flesh" as used by Paul often refers to the sinful nature that is uncontrolled and hostile to God. The "works of the flesh" are centered in rivalry.

- The Fruit of the Spirit are characteristics that promote unity and embody Christ's attitude. The Fruit of the Spirit are how a community of people who have received the Holy Spirit should operate. The Fruit of the Spirit is centered in cooperation and love. This is how Christians should treat each other and the larger world around them.

Conclusion

- The Fruit of the Spirit is a marker of a Spirit-filled church. These attitudes should flow out of our relationship with Jesus as we walk in step with the Holy Spirit.
- The Fruit of Spirit is one of the best evangelism tools at our disposal. It is something that will attract rather than repel the world.
- The Fruit of the Spirit is the best toolset you have to heal broken relationships, change how you treat others, and build healthy families, friendships, and churches.

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Discusssion

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1. Paul was trying to bring together different people as one church. Jewish believers and Gentile believers came from different backgrounds and cultures. What are some challenges modern church face in bringing together people as one church? What are some of our current disagreements and divisions?
2. How can Christians from different social, political, and racial backgrounds not only coexist but unify as the church? Why is it essential for Christians to be examples of unity? How does the Fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5 help that cause?
3. Look at the list of the “works of the flesh” in Galatians 5. Which of the “works of flesh” have you seen the most in your interactions with other Christians? Are there any that you find particularly troublesome? How do these works tear down a church’s unity?

4. Look at the list of the “Fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5. Which of these have you seen demonstrated most often in your interactions with other Christians? Out of this list, what is the easiest and hardest for you to embody?
5. How does the Fruit of the Spirit make Christians and the Church more attractive to unbelievers?

Application

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Bring It Home

Look through the list of the Fruit of the Spirit and write down one characteristic out of the list on a notecard or sticky note. Place that note somewhere conspicuous and remind yourself each morning to embody that one thing in all of your interactions at home, work, and church.

Closing Prayer

“Heavenly Father, I thank You for giving me the opportunity to grow into the person You have designed me to become. I ask for Your grace to walk in step with the Holy Spirit this week. Help me to make choices that will honor You and prepare my heart to produce the Fruit of the Spirit. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.”