

Heading for Harvest:
A Fruit of the Spirit Study

by Joyce Jamerson

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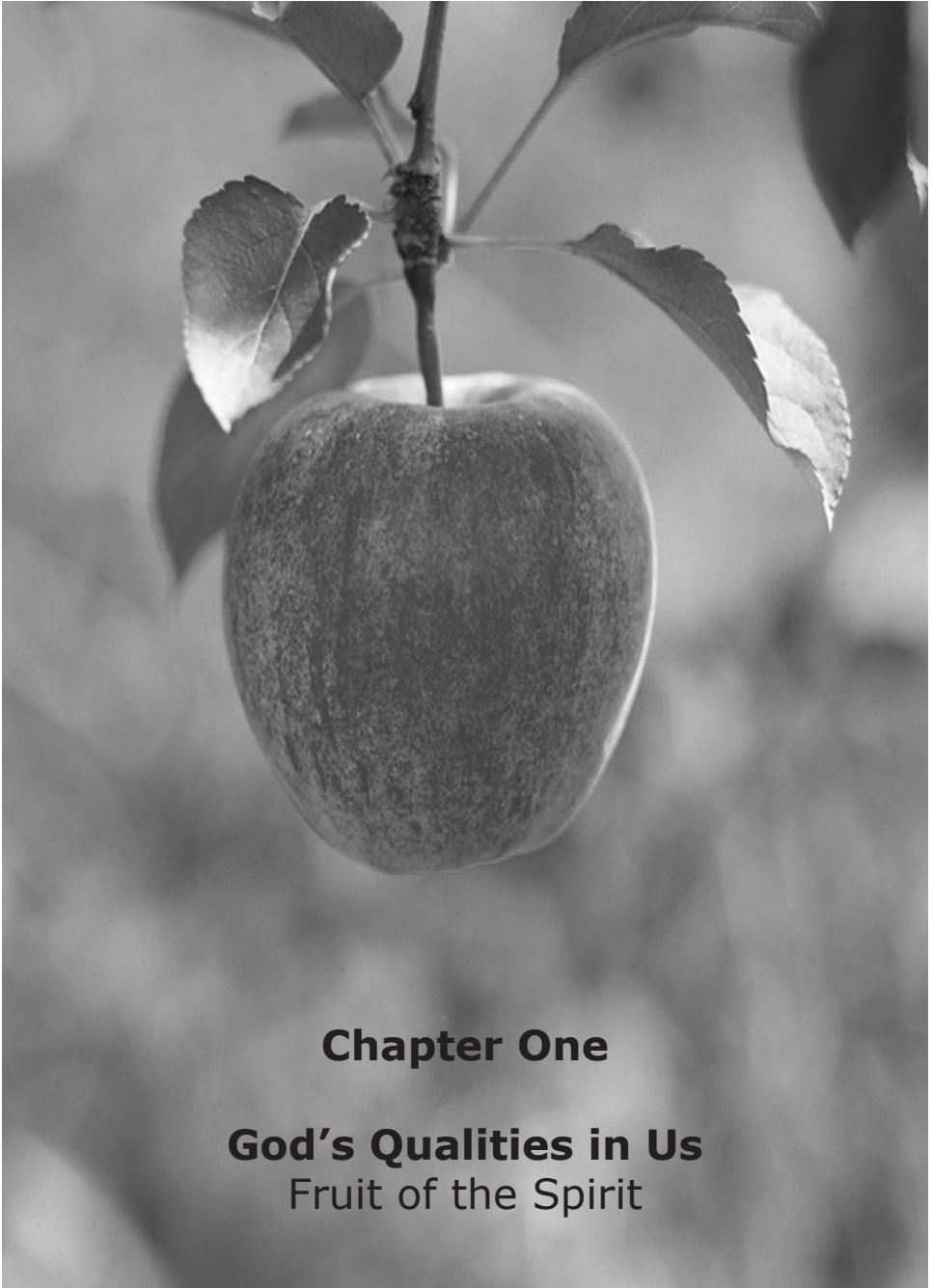
Introduction

Just before coming to my desk today, I cut into a fresh pineapple. It looked wonderful on the outside, the aroma was tempting and mouth watering. But on the inside, it wasn't so fresh. Evidence of decay was already present, and quickly my desire for this fruit changed. Now unusable for its intended purpose, it was spoiled, useless and suitable only for the trash can.

During this study, we'll be examining how we look on the outside and compare that to what we find on the inside. Women of God show their outer good works quite frequently, but their inner self may be more difficult to conquer. Growing in the Spirit is a test of putting aside our own desires to develop spiritual fruit. As with all fruit, this special fruit will ripen when we present the right conditions for growth.

Our fruit basket has many parts, but is not the type where you can pick only your favorite and leave the rest. Although we might prefer certain ones above the others, the whole of them are the true fruit of the Spirit. The first fruit ~ love ~ is the foundation for our growth and self-control is the hook ~ the snare. If we cannot or will not develop self-control, all the other fruit in the basket will be spoiled and useless. To the contrary, well developed, self-control can come to the rescue if we're losing our joy, peace, or patience. Self-control can prevent our decline into sin and bring us back into usefulness.

Spend some time thinking about these nine parts of the fruit; learn all of them. Refer to the Quicklist at the end of the book. Pray every day to develop this fruit of the Spirit and we'll grow and develop together as we study. Hopefully, this attempt will be a springboard for further study and growth. All scriptures are from the NASV unless otherwise noted.



Chapter One

God's Qualities in Us
Fruit of the Spirit

Chapter One

God's Qualities in Us Fruit of the Spirit

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing, John 15:5.

How many times have you experienced the battle for your mind? Your good self says to behave in a certain way, but your evil self is pulling your strings, trying to get some co-operation to lead you away from good. Knowing there will be a price to pay, there is still temptation, but the flip side is reward ~ reward for seeking, learning, and doing God's will.

How did Paul put it?

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me, Romans 7:18-20.

Paul is struggling with sin and we, as Christians, can identify with his struggle. It's what Barclay defines as warfare between flesh and spirit. Warfare is serious! A battle ~ with an enemy! Our desire, our manner of life is to be sinless but Satan has his own ways of distracting us, even in small ways. Why, when sitting down to study, are there so many distractions? Why, when in prayer, does the mind wander?

Paul continues in Romans 7:22-25,

For I joyfully concur (delight, NKJV) with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

We are in our own private war. Good self wants to be available for others, study more, teach more, visit more and be a help in whatever way is needed at the time. Bad self is the one that wants to fiddle away time on the internet or watch television or something equally nonsensical, when other things need attention ~ or it may say *I can't* when really *I could*, to the point of involving self in mundane things so there will be a selfish excuse to *not* be available for better things. *I'm too busy* is a flimsy excuse for failing to develop our fruit. Jesus didn't look kindly on the non-productive tree that had no fruit, Matthew 7:18-20.

Paul, writing to brethren in Galatia, pointed out,

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire (lust, NKJV) of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please, Galatians 5:16-17.

Paul had good reason for these admonitions, for starting his list of deeds of the flesh with immorality. The region of Galatia, as well as Rome and surrounding areas, were rampant with sexual immorality in all forms. Marriage was not honored; there was no shame in sexual relationships before marriage or outside marriage; homosexuality was out of control and the profits from legal prostitution were used to

erect temples to the gods, Flesh and Spirit, Barclay, page 25. These brethren were living their lives in the middle of evil.

Paul had taught these Gentiles on an earlier trip (Acts 13:14 -14:23) and was now instructing them again (they were being led astray), reminding them of their liberty in Christ Jesus.

•—————• They were saved by Him, loved by Him, guided by His Spirit, no longer justified by the law that had now served its purpose. They would live by putting to death the deeds of the body; "...**all** [emphasis jj] *who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God,*" Romans 8:13-14.

The fruit of the Spirit grows only in the garden of obedience.

Terry Fullam

•—————• And then, Paul's words come a little closer home. His lists of evil things are not just temptations of long ago; these are things that battle for a place in *our* lives ~ things that should no longer be practiced by anyone who has named Christ as their Savior.

...immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God, Galatians 5:19-21.

Paul is good with lists, so he presents another, representing the other side ~ the evidence of being led by the Spirit. When these things are developed in our lives, we *are* being led by the Spirit. Those who belong to Christ have put away the passions and desires mentioned in the previous verses because they are not from the Father, 1 John 2:16, 17.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law, Galatians 5:22-23.

Even though there are nine qualities listed, Paul refers to it in the singular, as one fruit. These collective things *are* the fruit of the Spirit. We understand the concept of fruit; the Bible speaks of it often.

- ❖ The *fruit of the womb* is a reward, Psalm 127:3.
- ❖ You shall eat of the *fruit of your hands*, Psalm 128:2.
- ❖ They will eat the *fruit of their actions*, Isaiah 3:10.

The *fruit of our lips* is the praise we give to God as is giving thanks to His name, Hebrews 13:15. To the negative, disaster is being brought upon the people because of the *fruit of their plans*, Jeremiah 6:19. Jesus said His Father is glorified when we bear much fruit (John 15:8), and in verse 4, *we cannot bear fruit unless we abide in Him*.

It is entirely significant that Paul speaks of the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5:19, 22. A work is something a man produces for himself; a fruit is something that is produced by a power which he does not possess. Man cannot make a fruit, Flesh and Spirit, Barclay, page 21.

In other words, we can get into enough trouble all on our own ~ all by ourselves, but producing good has to come from another power; we need help!

Fruit grows ~ tiny at first ~ but still fruit. Last Spring our two little peach trees had oodles of tiny fruit. We were calculating how many peaches we would have if they all developed! The right soil, the right conditions, and the right seed will produce good fruit. In this battle for the mind, we are to grow in these nine things that make up the fruit of the Spirit. The battle can be won by setting our minds on things of the Spirit, making sure our hearts (soil) are right, letting ourselves be led by this Spirit through the Word (seed). The familiar Psalm 119:105, "*Thy word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path*" is a favorite word picture.

Our modern application can be solar lighting. Solar lighting outlines sidewalks and driveways ~ tiny lights that certainly have power on their own, but shine better as a group. They are powered by the sun. Interestingly, the same can be said for us. We have little power on our own, but shine better when in a group, and *our* light is powered by the Son. The Word shows us the way.

In his New Testament Commentary, John McArthur has this to say:

The Spirit's provision of fruit might be compared to a man standing on a ladder in an orchard, picking the fruit and dropping it into a basket held by a helper below. No matter how much fruit is picked and dropped, the helper will not receive any unless he is standing under the ladder with his basket ready, New Testament Commentary, John McArthur, Galatians 5:22, 23.

The Spirit will help us develop this fruit as we grow in the Word. Are we standing under the ladder ~ the Word ~ with our baskets ready?

What magnificent growth opportunities (blessings) God provided when He gave us His Spirit.

- ❖ Jesus sent us a Helper, John 16:7-8.
- ❖ We are given His Spirit when we obey Him, John 7:37-39; Acts 2:38; 5:32.
- ❖ Through the Holy Spirit, we see God's love and how it has been poured out, into our hearts, Romans 5:5.
- ❖ He has given us life and peace through the Spirit, Romans 8:6.
- ❖ The Spirit helps our weakness and intercedes for us, Romans 8:26.

- ❖ He would grant us strength through His Spirit, Ephesians 3:16.
- ❖ He has given us the Word ~ “*the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,*” Ephesians 6:17.

Every now and then, Frank and I will take some time to walk around the botanical gardens in Huntsville. The beautiful blooms, towering trees, and cultivation of unusual and exotic plants give testimony to the hours of care that must have taken place in order for us to enjoy them. Proper growth requires soil with nutrients, planting, fertilizer, sunshine and rain (more nourishment), as well as the right knowledge and a schedule of spraying to keep away blights and insects.

Spiritual growth requires a student, an atmosphere conducive to study, a planned schedule, and nourishment gained from the Word. Distraction is around every corner, but the effort has to be put forth in order to grow, and it won't happen in a 45 minute class on Sunday mornings! Jesus guided the apostles into all truth, and that same truth helps us. Through His Word, we have a Helper ~ always ready to teach us, John 14:26. Are you ready to grow?

*Those who are planted in the house of the LORD
Shall flourish in the courts of our God.
They shall still bear fruit in old age;
They shall be fresh and flourishing,
To declare that the LORD is upright;
He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in
Him, Psalm 92:13-15, NKJV.*

Questions for study and growth:

1. Compare living by the flesh with living by the Spirit.

2. What is the evidence of being led by the Spirit?

3. Why does a tree or plant stop bearing fruit?

4. In what ways can we stop bearing fruit?

5. What did Jesus say would happen when we bear fruit?

6. How can the battle for the mind be won? (3 things)

7. What does spiritual growth require?

8. Make a plan for growth and share it with others.

Sharing: You've collected your Bible and workbook and any resources and are ready to sit down and study but your mind is frayed and there never seems to be enough time. Discuss ways to avoid distraction.