

MARK JENKINS MINISTRIES

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January 2020
Spiritual Fruit

Dear Friend,

The Bible is full of examples in which things in this natural world are used to illustrate spiritual truths. Think of all the times Jesus referred to something in this natural world, like a house built on a rock to illustrate a spiritual truth of what a person is like who hears and does His sayings (Luke 6:47). Other examples include: seeds planted in various kinds of soil, a pearl of great price hidden in a field, a farmer building bigger barns to house his vast wealth, and wine bursting bottles. It seems as though every time Jesus taught He used something in this natural world to illustrate His point.

To be an effective bible teacher it is imperative that these kinds of illustrations be used. Take the Apostle Paul for example; like Jesus, Paul pointed to things in the natural world to help explain difficult spiritual concepts. One such example can be found in Paul's letter to the Galatians, where Paul was describing the qualities of a recreated human spirit. In the fifth chapter of Galatians, Paul identifies these qualities as "fruit". (Galatians 5:22-23)

"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

By identifying these as "fruit" our minds immediately envision a tree, such as an apple tree, with big, beautiful, fruit hanging from its branches. As a result, we immediately begin to see our human spirit with fruit being produced by it like those apples on a tree. The difference is that the fruit produced by our spirit is to benefit both the person bearing the fruit, as well as, those with whom they come in contact.

Consider what is being said here. Paul names a list of beautiful qualities and says that these qualities come from the inside out. In other words, love isn't something we try to have for one another through gritted teeth. Love is a fruit that is borne by our recreated human spirit. This isn't the kind of love that is based on emotions; it is a spiritual force that comes out of your reborn human

spirit. As a result, you don't try to love others, you actually love them with God's kind of love because it's who you are, just like a tree that produces apples is an apple tree.

Joy, the second fruit mentioned, like love, has absolutely nothing to do with what is happening in this natural world. That's because this joy isn't based on natural circumstances, which can change in a moment's notice. This is joy that's available any time of the night or day. It's joy that bubbles up from an unseen source, a source that knows no limits. It comes out of that wellspring Jesus spoke of in John 4:14.

“But whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

This well that has no limits is our reborn human spirit with the life of God living in us in the person of the Holy Ghost. What flows from here is from everlasting to everlasting. “Mark, I don't know this flow you're speaking of or this joy, why?”

It is like walking into a closet with the light off. You are oblivious to whatever is in the closet because the light is not turned on. Turn on the light and see all that is available to you. “But Mark my life is a mess. How can I experience this joy when I'm in the mess I'm in?” The truth of the matter is that it is when we are surrounded by all kinds of impossible circumstances that we especially need to draw from this wellspring of life and rejoice regardless of our circumstances.

Jesus also spoke in John of the rivers of living water that would flow out of our bellies. (John 7:38)

“He that believeth on Me, as the scriptures have said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

Out of this same place where rivers of living water flow comes the fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. These are **not** virtues that a person **tries** to have, they are spiritual forces that come forth out of the same place from which this living water flows. It's time we recognize the potential from within and cultivate it in our lives by spending time in fellowship with God.

As we do this, love, the God kind of love, begins to flow from us and we become a magnet to those around us. Joy begins to bubble up from inside no matter the circumstances that we face. Our hearts will be anchored in a peace that passes

all understanding. A good example of this can be seen in the lives of Paul and Silas in Acts 16:25.

“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God; and the prisoners heard them.”

If you look back to the 23rd verse you see that Paul and Silas had already had their clothes torn off and were beaten with many stripes. Then, to make matters worse, they were thrown into prison, and not like any prison we have today. Prisons back then were horrible, dank, dark places beyond anything we can imagine.

But, even at that, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God. Were they in pain? Oh, most certainly yes they had to be in pain, sitting in that prison, soaked in their own blood. But, they were able to draw from an unseen source down deep within and out came love, joy, and peace in the midst of devastating circumstances. What’s so wonderful is that all these fruit of the spirit are available right now to be enjoyed by us if we will only set our attention on Him and off of our circumstances.

The next fruit on our list is one that is seldom discussed and yet I believe it to be just as important as love, joy, and peace, that being longsuffering. The fruit of longsuffering is one that eludes many. The word longsuffering is defined as patience. In today’s world the fruit of patience is underappreciated, mostly because we have become such an “instant society”. We tap our foot as we painfully wait for the microwave to ding after suffering through an entire 30 seconds to warm up our food. Then, we complain because it took so long.

This same attitude has carried over into our spiritual life as well. Notice how church services keep getting fewer and fewer in number and shorter in length. We want our spiritual life to fit neatly into a 30 to 45 minute, once a week service that doesn’t impose on the rest of our lives. When something happens and we need God’s intervention in our lives, then it must happen in the time frame we expect or we get mad at God and fuss because our solution didn’t come when we wanted it to come.

We have become, for a lack of a better term, so self-absorbed with our lives that all too often we are the center of our own universe and the world is expected to turn around us and what we want. Then, someone starts talking about “longsuffering”, or as it is translated, patience, and everyone seems to turn a deaf ear to the topic. Why? I believe it is mostly because “patience” is not seen as the spiritual force that it is.

Patience is mistakenly viewed as something other than a product flowing from our reborn human spirit. Instead, it is seen as something we are supposed to have, but never to ask God for, because “If you ask God for patience something bad will most likely happen to teach you about patience”. That idea is wrong on so many levels that it is difficult to know where to start.

Suffice it to say that patience, or rather, longsuffering, like the rest of the fruit of the spirit, isn't something we should be asking God to give us. We can certainly ask for the understanding of what we have, but to ask God to give us this fruit is a wasted prayer. Although, maybe as we endeavor to understand this fruit of the spirit we might ask God for the understanding of how to tap into this vast wealth of spiritual fruit through fellowship with Him.

Instead of looking at all the fruit of the spirit and deciding to ask for each one to be given to you by God, maybe the better question might be to ask God reveal the path for developing this fruit. I believe the journey of discovery will begin with our acknowledging that we are the ones who determine how much or how little of this fruit we see manifested in our lives and not God. We need to stop thinking God is holding something we need back from us and won't give it to us until we do something or act a certain way, especially when it comes to this fruit.

I keep coming back to this fruit of longsuffering because of how misunderstood it seems to be. I'll say it again, it's not gritting your teeth and putting up with something. Longsuffering is as much a spiritual force as love, joy, and peace. In fact I believe longsuffering is the fruit that will help you see that manifestation of all the other fruit. I believe this because longsuffering brings with it an element of “unchangeableness” that keeps you firm in place so that love, joy, and peace have the opportunity to manifest.

We have only looked at a few of the fruit of the spirit. I encourage you to take a second look at the entire list of fruit and ask the Holy Ghost to show you in what area you might need to improve. Once you see it, draw from the fruit of longsuffering, which will enable you to patiently endure, as the other fruit is able to manifest in your life.

I hope this message blessed you.

~ Jesus Loves You!

Mark Jenkins