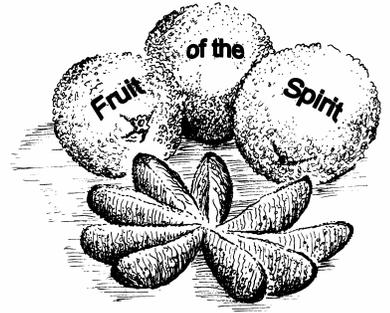


Journey Into Christlikeness

LESSON 1 . . . Becoming the Person God Wants You To Be (Galatians 5:22-23 & John 15:1-5)



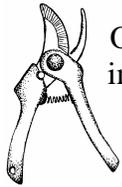
NOTES

What kind of people does God want us to be? Basically, God wants us to become more and more like Jesus Christ. This means God wants our lives to be a “journey into Christlikeness.” To become Christlike, we must allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives to produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is a word picture of Jesus Christ. According to Galatians 5:22-23a, what are the nine elements of the *fruit of the Spirit* that make us like Christ?

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____
7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____

In John 15, Jesus uses the illustration of a vineyard to tell us how to allow the Holy Spirit to produce His fruit. In this passage Jesus is the Vine, we are the branches, and God is the Divine Gardener. From this illustration we find **two** things we must do to become the people God wants us to be.

First, we must allow God to be our Pruner.



Our Heavenly Father is our spiritual Gardener, so He knows the importance of pruning—removing unnecessary parts from a plant to increase fruit production and quality. Jesus says, *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman* (John 15:1). Then, He states: *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away* (15:2a). This refers to people who are not true believers. They are “branches,” like Judas Iscariot, who only appear to be connected to the Vine. They go to church, use Christian jargon, and seem to be believers but are not. In Matthew 7:20, how does Jesus say we can recognize true believers?

If we are truly connected to the life-giving Vine, spiritual fruit will be evident in our lives. Referring to true believers, Jesus says *and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit* (John 15:2b). The word translated *purgeth* means “to prune.” Jesus is the Vine, which means He is our source of spiritual life, and God is our spiritual Pruner. A good pruner uses sharp tools for pruning. Let’s look at **two** ways the Master Pruner prunes us . . .

1. God prunes us with the Bible. As we read and apply the Bible, it reveals all the stuff—sin—in our lives that prevents us from producing the fruit of the Spirit. God’s Word is *quick, and powerful* (Heb. 4:12a). The word *quick* means “alive.” Because God’s Word is alive, it works in our lives to prune us as we read it or listen to it being taught or preached. How does Hebrews 4:12b describe what God’s Word does in our lives?



This is the primary way God prunes our lives and is also the least painful part of the pruning process. However, if pruning doesn’t work, God takes a more painful approach . . .

2. God prunes us with problems. If we refuse to apply God’s Word to our lives and make the necessary changes, God begins to chip away with problems. When we don’t respond to the sharp knife of the Word of God, then God brings out the “loppers”—problems—to do some serious, painful pruning. The more pruning required, the more painful the process. How does David express the result of this type of pruning in Psalm 119:67?

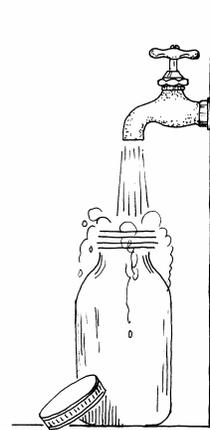
God is far more concerned with our character than our comfort. The Bible tells us to *glory in tribulation* because our *tribulation* or problems produce *experience* (Rom. 5:3-4). The word translated *experience* means “proven character.” To become the people God wants us to be, **we must allow God to be our Pruner**, and . . .

Second, we must abide in Christ.

Jesus tells us: *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches* (John 15:4-5a). Then, what does Jesus say in the rest of verse 5?

Jesus uses the words *abide* or *abideth* four times in these two verses. To *bear* spiritual *fruit* and become the people God wants us to be, we must *abide* in Christ. To *abide* in Christ, we must do **two** things . . .

1. We must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Though the text doesn't say it, I believe the "sap" that runs between the Vine (Christ) and the branches (us) is the Holy Spirit. If abiding in the Vine produces the fruit of the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit must be involved in the process. So, abiding in Christ requires our being filled with the Holy Spirit. We are commanded: *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess* (Eph. 5:18a). Then, what are we commanded to do in Ephesians 5:18b?



The word *filled* means to be controlled by. For example, if people are filled with anger, they are controlled by anger. If people are filled with compassion, they are controlled by compassion. When we are *filled* with the Holy Spirit, we are controlled by the Holy Spirit.

The verb *filled* is present tense, so Ephesians 5:18b literally means "be continually *filled* with the Spirit." Therefore, every day we must decide whether to let the Holy Spirit control us or to let our sinful natures control us. Being *filled* with the Holy Spirit is not a "once and for all" happening but a daily surrendering to the Holy Spirit's control of our lives.

The fruit of the Spirit, which is Christlike character, is not produced by self-effort. It is the natural result of being attached to the Vine and letting the Holy Spirit control us. We don't **try** to be loving and joyful; those characteristics come naturally as we abide in Christ and are *filled* with the Holy Spirit. But how are we *filled* with the Holy Spirit? First, we must obey what command in Ephesians 4:30a?

The Holy Spirit is a person, not an "it," and we can *grieve* or sadden Him by the way we live. The next verse in Ephesians 4 lists the attitudes and actions that *grieve* the Holy Spirit and prevent us from being filled with the Holy Spirit. To be *filled* with the Spirit so He can produce the fruit of the Spirit (Christlikeness) in us, we must get rid of *all bitterness* [refusing to forgive], *and wrath* [rage or violent actions], *and anger, and clamour* [yelling] *and evil speaking* [slander or gossip] and *all malice* [attempts to harm others] (Eph. 4:31). When we get these things out of our lives, the Holy Spirit is able to produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, thus enabling us to become the people God wants us to be. We can't do this on our own; we must have the help of the Holy Spirit. How does God help us, according to Philippians 2:13?

This means the Holy Spirit gives us both the desire and the power to become Christlike—the people God wants us to be. To abide in Christ, **we must be filled with the Holy Spirit**, and . . .

2. We must obey God’s Word. We have two divine guides in life, the Holy Spirit and God’s Word. God gives us both to help us become the people He wants us to be. In John 14:26b, what does Jesus say the Holy Spirit will do for us?

Part of the Holy Spirit’s ministry is to bring scriptures to our minds to encourage us, to know God’s will, and to resist temptation. The Holy Spirit and the Word of God work in tandem to help us become the people God wants us to be. The Bible tells us how we should live, and the Holy Spirit empowers us to live that way. The Bible is God’s inspired Word *and is profitable for doctrine* [instructing us in what is true], *for reproof* [revealing what is wrong in our lives], *for correction* [telling us how to get right], *for instruction in righteousness* [teaching us to continue in what is right] (2 Tim. 3:16). According to 2 Timothy 3:17, what is the result of allowing God’s Word to do these things in our lives?

If we are serious about becoming the people God wants us to be, we must get serious about the Bible. We need to hear it, read it, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we need to apply it and live it.

Becoming the persons God wants us to be is a partnership. First, **we must allow God to be our Pruner**: He **prunes us with the Bible**, and when that doesn’t work, He **prunes us with problems**. That’s God’s part.

Then, there’s our part: **we must abide in Christ**, which means we are **filled with the Holy Spirit** and we **obey God’s Word**. If we do these two things, He will produce the fruit of the Spirit in us and we will have a “journey into Christlikeness,” which means we will become the people God wants us to be. Which of these two areas needs the most attention in your life, and when will you begin to do something about it?

