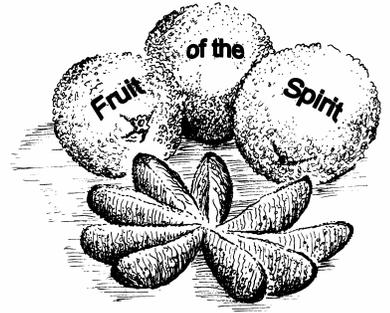


Journey Into Christlikeness

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



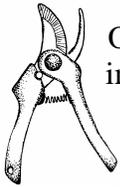
NOTES

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 gardener*” (John 15:1). Then, He states: *He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit* (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 *every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful* (John 15:2b). 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 *living and active* (Heb. 4:12a). The word

living 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 *rejoice in our sufferings* because *our sufferings* or problems produce *character* (Rom. 5:3-4). To become the people God wants us to be, **we must allow God to be our Pruner**, and . . .

Second, we must abide in Christ.

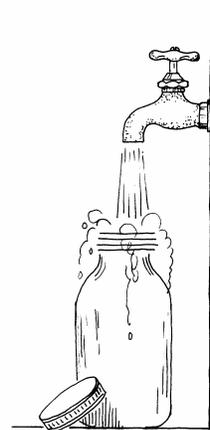
Jesus tells us: “*Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches*” (John 15:4-5a). Then, what does Jesus say in the rest of verse 5?

Jesus uses the words *remain* or *remains* five times in these two verses. To *bear* spiritual fruit and become the people God wants us to be, we must *remain* in Christ. To *remain* or 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, remaining in Christ requires our being filled with the Holy Spirit. We are commanded: *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery* (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 nature 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], *rage* [violent actions] *and anger, brawling* [yelling] *and slander* [gossip], *along with every form of 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 useful for teaching* [instructing us in what is true], *rebuking* [revealing what is wrong in our lives], *correcting* [telling us how to get right] *and training 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?

