

CHRISTIAN LOVE AND JOY

Study this lesson carefully before answering the questions.

ARE YOU BEARING THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT?



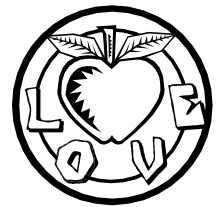
Let us take a close look at this cluster of spiritual fruit. As we look at it we might compare the fruit we are bearing as Christians and see whether we are bearing "Fruit," "More Fruit," or "Much Fruit."

Last month you studied about bearing fruit of the Spirit. Look up and read again Galatians 5:22 and 23. Notice that love and joy are the first two things on the list. You will study about Christian love and Christian joy this month so you can see how you can have these very important parts of the fruit of the

Spirit growing and showing in your life.

A. LOVE

How do we know when real, pure, Christ-like love is growing in our lives? The Bible tells us two ways to test our love to see if it is part of the fruit of the Spirit. Matthew 22:39 tells us "Thou shalt love thy neighbor **as thyself**." Is your interest in your neighbor like your interest in yourself? The second test of our love is even greater. In the Gospel of John, chapter 15, verse 12, Jesus says, "This is My commandment, that ye love one another, **as I have loved you**." Be honest with yourself. Do **you** love others as Jesus loves you? Think about this for a few minutes. Remember Jesus said, "This is my **commandment**." He **commands** you to let His great love go out to others through you. We should even be willing to die, if necessary, for others. Jesus died for us even before we loved Him. In Romans 5:8-10 we read that we were His enemies.



B. IT IS NOT EASY TO LOVE AN ENEMY

It is not easy to be kind to someone who has been mean or selfish or said things that are not true, but Jesus says **we must**. He is love and, because He lives in our hearts, He will help us to be like Him in loving others. The soldiers spit in His face and even His dearest friends left Him. He said nothing and kept on loving them. **Saying nothing** but **loving** and **praying** will often win an enemy and teach him to **love** instead of **hate**.

C. A MAN WHO LOVED HIS ENEMY

This is a true story. There once lived a faithful preacher named Peter Miller. Near him lived a neighbor who hated both him and his followers. Because this neighbor was unfaithful to his country, he was put in prison and was to die. As soon as Mr. Miller heard of this, he walked all the way to see the general in command and asked to have his neighbor's life saved. He was told that this could not be done for his friend. "**My friend?** He is not my friend," answered Peter Miller. "I have not a worse enemy living than that man." The general said, "Have you walked sixty miles to save the life of your enemy? That puts the matter in a different light. I will set him free." Mr. Miller took the paper that said his enemy could go free. He walked fifteen miles more to where his enemy was to be hung. The man saw him coming and cried, "Why, here is old Peter Miller. He has come all this way to see me hung!" Peter Miller stepped forward and handed over the pardon.



The life of his worst enemy was saved. Peter Miller had the love of Jesus in his heart for this man. Instead of seeing him only as an enemy, he saw him as a lost soul needing Jesus as his Savior. Mr. Miller was bearing "**Much Fruit**." Let the Lord have His way in your life so that His great love will grow in you and show itself as you help others.

D. JOY

Jesus tells us in the Bible that He wants us to be **full of joy** (Gospel of John 15:11). He says also that He gives **joy** to all His followers. Remember the chorus we sing, "I have the joy, joy, joy, down in my heart?" But all Christians are not joyful. Some are not bearing this part of the fruit of the Spirit. Surely our hearts should be bubbling over and our faces shining when we think of all the wonderful things that happen to us when we are saved. A trader asked a Hindu Christian what kind of paint he put on his face to make it shine. We know the glow came from the inside because he had the **joy of the Lord** in his heart. Here are some wonderful things that should make all Christians happy. ***Our sins are forgiven. Our sins are forgotten forever. We are children of God. We are freed from the punishment of sin. We have eternal life. We will live forever with the Lord***

Jesus. These are only part of the things that are given to us and done for us when we are born again. Is this not enough to fill us with joy, that deep, lasting joy that stays?

E. IT IS OUR DUTY TO BE JOYFUL

It is not only our **privilege** to be joyful but it is our **duty**. We cannot be a blessing to others if we go around with a sad look. The devil loves to get us "down in the dumps," but a Christian should not be that way. We owe it to others and to the Lord to be cheerful. (Of course, this does not mean to be giggling and laughing all the time. We can show we are happy without being too noisy.) We have no right to make things harder for others by having gloomy faces, by pouting or by grumbling. This is being selfish. We should encourage others and make them happy. We are the ones to start out in the morning with glad hearts and smiling faces.

F. THE SECRET OF HOW TO HAVE JOY

The secret of the way to have joy is to **always** do things that please God (Psalm 16:11). That means to be where He wants us to be, do what He wants us to do and say what He wants us to say. Life has many troubles for all of us. In spite of trouble, the one who is walking with and abiding in Christ has real joy.

If you got into an airplane that was out in the field by itself, it would just stay there. However, when the pilot comes, and starts the motors, it rises into the air like a giant bird. What happens? The plane is being held on the ground by the law of gravity, but the motors are more powerful than the law of gravity and cause the plane to fly high above the earth. If the motors stop in mid-air, the law of gravity will pull the plane to the ground. The power that lifts it would no longer be working. This is the way it is in the life of a Christian.

Accepting Christ as Savior is like stepping into the airplane. But then Christ, our Pilot, must be allowed to take and keep us high above sinful things (Ephesians 2:1-6). When we are having troubles, His power in us helps us to live **above** them. This is true every moment of the day as we stay close to Him. When something unpleasant comes along, He helps us to go right through it. If we are not trusting in the Lord to keep us from sin, we are like the plane whose motors stopped in mid-air. We get right back into the sinful things of the world that hold us down. These things get us all upset and gloomy. They keep us from being of any use to the Lord or to anyone else.

Live daily in the way this lesson teaches. **Love** others. Be a **joyful** Christian. Keep abiding in Christ and He will free you from all the things that keep you from loving others and that spoil your joy. Don't get away from close fellowship with Christ and He will make love, joy and all the other parts of the fruit of the Spirit grow and show in your life.

