



READING PLAN: 30 DAYS EXAMINING THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

# FRESH FRUIT

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# THIS DEVOTIONAL BELONGS TO

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## INTRODUCTION:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

Galatians 5:22–23

**AS A BELIEVER**, you are called to produce “fresh fruit,” i.e., every one of the fruits of the Spirit. Producing good fruit is an analogy for the godly attitudes, words and actions that come from a believer. However, this is not a call to some kind of spiritual legalism or salvation by works. Instead, these fruits are produced by those who remain dependent upon the Spirit.

In John 15: 4-5, Jesus says,

*“Remain in me, as I also 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. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”*

You are called to bear the fruit of the Spirit by abiding in and remaining connected to Jesus. The result of your dependence on Him is a harvest of spiritual fruit.

Over the next 30 days, you have the opportunity to explore each of these fruits from a variety of passages of Scripture. Each day consists of four devotional elements:

1. A Bible passage centered on one of the fruits of the Spirit
2. A devotional thought based on the verses for the day
3. A reflection question
4. A short prayer

As you spend the upcoming days studying the fruit of the Spirit, our hope is that you would learn the qualities of the fruit you are called to make as you remain dependent upon the work of Jesus and the power of the Spirit. May God work in you to produce fresh fruit!

## DAY ONE: FRESH OR ROTTEN FRUIT?

*So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

Galatians 5:16-18

**THE CENTRAL COMMAND** in Galatians 5:16-24 is the call to “walk by the Spirit.” This phrase is best understood as “be always walking by the Spirit.” In other words, your task as a Christian is to continually follow the Spirit so that you produce spiritual fruit, or what this devotional is calling “fresh fruit.” However, a failure to stay connected to the Spirit results in the fruit of the destructive nature of the sin inside you, or “rotten fruit.” You stay close to the Spirit by constantly pursuing a relationship with the Lord through disciplines like prayer and reading God’s Word. Though the war over sin and death was won by Jesus, the Christian life is a daily battle between the Spirit and your own flesh. You are called to be continually directed and empowered so that you can be victorious over the sinful desires of your flesh.

**What does it look like for you to “walk by the Spirit?”**

**PRAY:** Lord, give me the direction and strength to walk by Your Spirit so that I may not gratify the desires of my flesh.

## DAY TWO: THE FRUIT OF THE FLESH

*The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;<sup>20</sup> idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions<sup>21</sup> and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Galatians 5:19-21

**WHEN YOU PLANT AN APPLE SEED**, you expect an apple tree to grow. When you follow your sinful desires, you produce a fleshly kind of fruit. You reap what you sow. Naturally, the world is characterized by these fruits of the flesh. Scripture also says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17)! Every person needs the transformation of salvation in Jesus – to have a new kind of seed planted in their heart so that they would produce a godly kind of fruit. When you follow Jesus, you are able and called to produce a different kind of fruit because you've been made new.

**Does the fruit in your life show you are living according to your old sinful nature or your new nature in Jesus?**

**PRAY:** Lord, teach me to live according to the new nature You have given me in Jesus so that I may produce the fruits of the Spirit.

## DAY THREE: LOVE

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.... You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.<sup>14</sup> For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."*

Galatians 5:6, 13-14

**THE FIRST FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** listed in Galatians 5:22-23 is love. Though there are different words for love in the New Testament, here "love" is first and foremost defined by God. This is a kind of love that has no limitations and expresses itself in genuine affection and regard for another. In reality, love isn't simply the first among equals, but the summation of all of the fruit of the Spirit. Love is one of the most frequently used words in Paul's vocabulary, occurring over 100 times as either a verb or a noun. In the context of Galatians, Paul argues that loving others is the full expression of being a child of God. A true understanding of God's grace does not delight in the fruit of the flesh, but delights in loving others like Jesus loved you (see John 15:12-13). Your faith should express itself in a love for others.

**Do people see your love for God by the way you love others?**

**PRAY:** Lord, help me love others with the love You have given me.



## DAY FOUR: LOVE

*Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.<sup>9</sup> The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>10</sup> Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

### Romans 13:8-10

**IN THIS PASSAGE,** Paul lists the back half of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:13-17; Deuteronomy 5:17-21) and summarizes them by quoting Leviticus 19:18. This is similar to what Jesus does in summarizing the Law as loving God and loving others (Matthew 22:37-40). Love fulfills the entire Old Testament Law. The Law was designed to reflect God’s character and show God’s people their own inability and need for a Savior. God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). The Spirit now enables every believer to reflect this immeasurable love, truly fulfilling the Law by doing what they could not do apart from the Lord’s spiritual transformation. In other words, your ability to love is truly a fruit of God’s transforming work, and the only way you can love others is by depending on His power in you.

### Do you depend on the Spirit to help you love others?

**PRAY:** Lord, thank You for empowering me with Your Spirit. Give me the strength to love like You have loved me.





## DAY FIVE: LOVE

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. <sup>8</sup> Love never fails.*

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

**SOMETIMES THE WORLD TALKS ABOUT LOVE** as an abstract concept, but here Paul provides some practical characteristics of love that flow from God's character and nature. Your love should be patient, modeling God's patience with you. Your love should be kind, modeling God's kindness and grace toward you. Your love should be selfless, modeling the humility of Jesus. Your love should always be truthful, modeling the uncompromising nature of God. Your love should persevere, modeling God's relentless pursuit of you. God is love and we love because He first loved us (1 John 4:7-21).

**Does your love for others look like God's love for you?**

**PRAY:** Lord, teach me to look at Your character as my model for how I am called to love others.



## DAY SIX: JOY

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*

Philippians 4:4

**THE SECOND FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** from Galatians 5:22–23 is joy. Joy is the experience of gladness that only comes from the Lord. Today's verse lies at the heart of the book of Philippians. Even though Paul was in chains while he penned these words, his joyous chorus never faded. How was that possible? Paul's joy transcended his situations and circumstances. He knew what it was like to have a lot and to have nothing. However, his contentment remained wholly in Jesus because he knew Jesus to be better than anything else in this life. Joy is a Christian distinctive. Your circumstances and situations can never take away the joy of the good news. When your joy is in the Lord, your joy will never fade.

### Do your circumstances dictate your joy?

**PRAY:** Lord, no matter what happens today, remind me that You are the source of my joy.



## DAY SEVEN: JOY

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,<sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.*

James 1:2

**JOY AND TRIALS SEEM LIKE OPPOSITES.** How can these two coexist? James states clearly that your call in Christ is to consider every trial an opportunity for joy and praise. James encouraged these Christians to embrace their trials not at face value but for what God could accomplish through them. It's easy to be happy when things are going well, but the true test of your faith is if you have joy when trials come (see Romans 5:2-5 and 1 Peter 1:6-7). Everything that happens in your life is an opportunity for growth in your relationship with the Lord. You can be joyful in any and every trial because they are necessary for your holiness and conformity to Christ. Furthermore, your trials are evidence that God is working in and through you. Take heart and have joy! For the Lord desires to work in and through you for His glory and your sanctification.

**Do your trials produce joy or grumbling?**

**PRAY:** Lord, help me understand all of the trials in my life as an opportunity to be joyful.



## DAY EIGHT: JOY

*I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers,<sup>5</sup> because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup> I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. <sup>7</sup> Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.*

### Philemon 4-7

**THE JOYFUL WORK OF PHILEMON** refreshed Paul's heart with great joy and encouragement. Too often are Christians marked by misery or apathy when walking in supposed obedience. Believers are often depicted as "kill-joys" in modern media because somehow the Christian life is portrayed as more akin to death than it is to life. However, this could not be further from the truth. True obedience leads to genuine joy. Every act of obedience and every moment of worship can proclaim the joy you have in the Lord. Furthermore, your joy in the Lord is designed to be contagious. You need to remember that every person you encounter is in need of the joy you have in Jesus. Be joyful so that others may know His joy!

### Does your joyful obedience lead others to rejoice in the Lord?

**PRAY:** Lord, remind me today that Your joy in me is designed to be contagious.



## DAY NINE: PEACE

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Romans 5:1

**THE THIRD FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** from Galatians 5:22–23 is peace. Peace is an internal state and external pursuit of harmony and right order. To see the fruit of peace in your life, you must first understand peace as a “root” in your life. Your peace with God lays the foundation for your peace in life. You were created to have a relationship with God and reflect Him throughout the world. When sin entered the world, you became an enemy of God. You did your own thing. You went your own way. Your life was marked by turmoil and chaos because you were living out of sync with your Maker and against your intended design. Through the work of Jesus, He took your deserved punishment and gave you life so that you gain what was lost in God’s good creation: peace with God. The only way to have peace in your life is to first have peace with God through a relationship with His Son, Jesus.

**Are you at peace with God or are you an enemy of God?**

**PRAY:** Lord, I believe that I have peace with You, not because of my actions, but because of the work of Jesus. Restore me and help me know Your peace in my life.



## DAY TEN: PEACE

*Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*

Romans 14:19

**IN ITS CONTEXT,** Paul is encouraging the church to keep a relationship with God the main thing and not become distracted by the preferences and opinions of others. The goal of your interactions with others is peace and encouragement. Earlier in Romans, Paul says something similar, “If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” There’s no question that difficult people will come your way and tempt you to pursue conflict, but your goal is to keep the Gospel at the forefront and live in peace. This doesn’t mean you should become a doormat! Rather, you are called to stand firm in your convictions while simultaneously seeking to understand and build others up. As James says, you need to learn to be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry in your relationships (James 1:19).

**Are your relationships marked by peace or conflict?**

**PRAY:** Lord, help me pursue peace above all else in my relationships.



## DAY ELEVEN: PEACE

*But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.  
18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.*

James 3:17-18

**IN THE PREVIOUS VERSE,** James says that envy and selfish ambition lead to disorder and evil. Chaos is the norm when walking by the flesh and living in the world's wisdom. In contrast, God's wisdom in the believer leads to peace because it is pure and separated from the wisdom of the world. The more you spend time with the Lord and walk by His Spirit, the more you will produce the fruit of peace: You will be more considerate and understanding; you will be more humble and dependent upon the Lord; you will be more merciful and forgiving. As a result, when you pursue God's wisdom in this way, you will be called a peacemaker.

### Are you known as a peacemaker?

**PRAY:** Lord, teach me who You are so that I may be defined by Your wisdom and become a peacemaker.



## DAY TWELVE: PATIENCE

*Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.<sup>16</sup> But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.*

1 Timothy 1:15-16

**THE FOURTH FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** from Galatians 5:22–23 is patience (sometimes translated as forbearance). Patience is the God-given ability to endure and be long-suffering in any situation. Patience is best displayed in God's patience toward His children. Paul says that despite his past, God's "immense patience" was displayed in his salvation. Every believer is a product of this same long-suffering love of God. God's patience is perfectly displayed in that even after your sin and rebellion, He pursued you and called you to Himself. You are called to be patient throughout your life because God was first patient with you.

**How often do you reflect on God's "immense patience" towards you?**

**PRAY:** Lord, thank You for the patience and grace You always give me!





## DAY THIRTEEN: PATIENCE

*Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.*

2 Timothy 4:2

**IN THIS PASSAGE,** Paul encouraged Timothy to not only be ready to preach the Word at all times but also to be patient and diligent with those receiving the Word. As you model God's patience to the world around you, be ready for the impatience and lack of understanding from others. It is important to remember that those who do not know the patience of God cannot model the patience of God. You can't hold them to a standard to which they have not been transformed. Rather, in modeling patience to everyone, you pray that they would come to know God. Your job is to diligently and patiently lead people into the Word of God believing that it is God who grants understanding.

**Are you patient with others as you live and teach His Word?**

**PRAY:** Lord, as You have shown me patience, help me patiently and faithfully present Your Word in my life so that those who do not know Your patient love would embrace it.



## DAY FOURTEEN: PATIENCE

*Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.*

James 5:10

**THERE IS AN EXPECTATION** in the New Testament that believers will suffer and endure trials in this life. You are called to be patient in the face of suffering like the prophets in the Old Testament were patient (see Matthew 5:10-12 and Hebrews 11). The next verse provides an example through the steadfastness of Job (James 5:11). Job was a wealthy man who lost everything, but as Job endured his trials, the Lord proved Himself to be God Almighty (Job 38-42). Other patient examples included in the Old Testament are Abraham and Rahab (James 2:20-25) and Elijah (5:17-18). You are called to practice the same patience in suffering because you remember that God's future promises are greater than anything you may endure in this life. As Paul declares, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

**Do you respond to the trials and suffering in your life with patience or complaining?**

**PRAY:** Lord, help me endure the hardships of this life like the prophets in the Old Testament so that I might fix my eyes on You and not my troubles.



## DAY FIFTEEN: KINDNESS

*Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?*

Romans 2:4

**THE FIFTH FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** from Galatians 5:22–23 is kindness. Kindness is the quality of being helpful or beneficial and is related to goodness and generosity. As with all of the fruits of the Spirit, kindness is best exemplified in God's kindness toward His people. In today's verse, Paul asks a rhetorical question that communicates an important truth: God's kindness is intended to lead you toward repentance and imitation. God's kindness is displayed in His patience, mercy, and grace toward every sinner. In the context of the surrounding verses of Romans 2, God's gracious dealing with His people should lead you to demonstrate His kindness and patience to everyone. When you forget His kindness, you fail to display His kindness. Your kindness toward others must find its root in the kindness of God.

**Is your kindness toward others based on God's kindness or your personal preference?**

**PRAY:** Lord, remind me of Your kindness so that I may display Your kindness toward others.



## DAY SIXTEEN: KINDNESS

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.<sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.<sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

Colossians 3:12-14

**THE FRUIT OF KINDNESS** is related to all the terms listed in this passage: compassion, humility, gentleness, patience, endurance, forgiveness and love. Because God loves you and has chosen you to be a part of His people, you are called to walk around clothed with His kindness in all your dealings with others. The world claims that only those who are kind to you deserve your kindness, but according to this passage, your kindness is not to be sheathed or wielded based on your preference. Being kind only when it is convenient or when people deserve it is a mockery of the kindness you have received. Rather, because of God's love toward you, your kindness should always be at the ready, willing to gently pursue forgiveness and restoration.

**Do you withhold your kindness from others based on how they treat you?**

**PRAY:** Lord, lead me to show Your kindness to others regardless of how they treat me.



## DAY SEVENTEEN: KINDNESS

*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.<sup>32</sup> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Ephesians 4:31–32

**THE OPPOSITE OF KINDNESS** is rage, anger, brawling, slander and malice because the essence of kindness is compassion and forgiveness. When you are harsh and angry with others, you display the fruits of the flesh rather than the fruit of the Spirit, hence the previous verse's urging, "do not grieve the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 4:30). Your bitterness toward others accomplishes nothing. Your anger toward others will never achieve reconciliation. Your shouting and slander toward others will only perpetuate more shouting and slander. When you choose to produce these kinds of fruits, you end up in a cycle of unforgiveness and your relationships suffer. You are called to display a kindness that results in godly forgiveness and restoration.

**Is your life marked more by kindness and compassion or bitterness and anger?**

**PRAY:** Lord, forgive me for my bitterness and anger toward others. Give me the strength to be as kind and compassionate to others as You have been with me.



## DAY EIGHTEEN: GOODNESS

*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) <sup>10</sup> and find out what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.*

### Ephesians 5:8-11

**THE SIXTH FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** from Galatians 5:22–23 is goodness. Practically speaking, many define goodness as living with a benevolence and generosity toward others. However, goodness goes beyond a moral action and is really a striving toward excellence in character. God defines what is good, and therefore goodness is best understood in relation to godliness. According to today's passage, when you were saved, you were not only brought into the light of the Lord, but you were called to live as a light in a dark world. How do you do that? A life of goodness, righteousness and truth will pierce the dark world. Goodness therefore possesses similar qualities to that of righteousness and truth, namely that they are reflections of the very character and nature of God. In your character and your actions, you are called to reflect the purity and goodness of God so that you shine like stars in this crooked and depraved generation (see Philippians 2:15).

### Do you see your life as a reflection of God's goodness?

**PRAY:** Lord, I know You to be good, perfect and right. Shine Your light through me so that Your goodness is on display.



## DAY NINETEEN: GOODNESS

*With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith.<sup>12</sup> We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ*

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

### **SALVATION RESULTS IN TRANSFORMED DESIRES.**

Before Jesus gave you a new heart through His Spirit, your natural goal was to satisfy the desires of your sin and flesh – a task that could never be accomplished. After salvation, you gain the desire to pursue goodness and live in a manner worthy of the Lord – a task that is accomplished through the power of the Spirit. Today's passage drives to the heart of the Spirit's role in bearing the fruit of the Spirit. As a believer, you have the assurance of Psalm 23:6, "Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life!" The only way you can produce His goodness is by learning to depend on the Lord. Submit to His ways. Cling to His Word. Be filled by Him by listening to and obeying His leading. In doing so, your new desire to reflect the Lord's goodness will grow into a reality.

### **Do you depend on the Lord to empower you to produce goodness?**

**PRAY:** Lord, empower me to become who You've called me to be.



## DAY TWENTY: GOODNESS

*I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.*

Romans 15:14

**PAUL NEVER VISITED THE CHURCH IN ROME.** He never experienced their fellowship and love firsthand, but he was confident they were a healthy and thriving church. How? Because he had heard about their love for God that was displayed in their reflection of His goodness. Their knowledge about the Lord and instruction in the Lord was not limited to a certain kind of believer, but the entire church was known by the fruit they produced. This should challenge you in two ways: First, you must remember that your knowledge of God should display itself in a transformed character that models His goodness. Second, the call for producing fruit is a collective call for the church. You are not called to pick and choose which spiritual fruit you should produce. Every Christian is called to be conformed into His image so that the people are united in displaying His good character in a world that longs for His goodness.

**Do those around you know the goodness of God by your actions?**

**PRAY:** Lord, let my knowledge of You join with other believers to display Your goodness.





## DAY TWENTY-ONE: FAITHFULNESS

*For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.*

Galatians 5:5

**THE SEVENTH FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** from Galatians 5:22–23 is faithfulness. First, faithfulness is rooted in the faithful God (Psalm 33:4). He is always and forever consistent in His promises to His people. Second, faithfulness for the believer is the quality of remaining steadfast and immovable to this faithful God. You are called to believe in the Lord and pledge your allegiance to Him through consistent and constant devotion. Prior to Paul listing out the fruit of the Spirit, he argues that it is only through the power of the Spirit that believers have this kind of sustained faith. In other words, you do not hold onto the faithful God, He holds on to you. The more you recognize your dependence on Him, the more faithful you will become.

**Is your faithfulness dependent upon His faithfulness?**

**PRAY:** Lord, thank You for always being faithful. Give me the strength to be immovable in my devotion to You.



## DAY TWENTY-TWO: FAITHFULNESS

*Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.*

2 Thessalonians 1:4

### **PERSEVERANCE IS A QUALITY OF FAITHFULNESS.**

Perseverance is the ability to continue in a set direction despite difficulty or guarantee of what may happen in the future. The trials and suffering you will face in this life demand a certain kind of steadfastness and commitment to keep going. Your journey to become a faithful follower of Christ should only be concerned with the next step of obedience. Even when you don't understand why you are in a particular situation, faithful followers continue to fix their eyes on Jesus and find their strength in Him alone (see Hebrews 12:1-3). In a world that takes the broad and comfortable way, stay faithful to Jesus as He leads you down the narrow way (see Matthew 7:13-14). Regardless of the earthly difficulty Jesus's way may bring, His will always lead to life, where the world will always lead to destruction.

### **Are you faithful even when life is hard?**

**PRAY:** Lord, grant me the strength to keep going even when life is tough.



## DAY TWENTY-THREE: FAITHFULNESS

*For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. <sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

### 2 Timothy 4:6-8

**PAUL'S CLOSING WORDS** in these verses capture the heart of a life of faithfulness. Paul lived a life that was constantly poured out for others. Even as death closed in, he remained faithful to his call. Paul then uses a few different sports analogies. He says that a life of service to King Jesus is the grandest match you can “fight” and “race” you can run. Though the games are over, he knew his victorious crown was certain because of the faithfulness of Jesus. You need to imitate Paul as he imitated Christ (see 1 Corinthians 11:1). Your main goal in life should be to stay focused on the good fight and the righteous race. Sin tries to throw in different opponents to fight and tries to veer you off your running course, but your task is to keep looking to Jesus. Victory in Him is always sure.

**What are some obstacles that are distracting you from faithfulness?**

**PRAY:** Lord, help me be like Paul, that I may fight the good fight and finish the race well by focusing my efforts on serving You.



## DAY TWENTY-FOUR: GENTLENESS

*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

Ephesians 4:1-3

**THE EIGHTH FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** from Galatians 5:22–23 is gentleness. Gentleness is related to humility and meekness and is defined as the quality of not being overly impressed by your personal importance. Jesus’s entire life was characterized by this kind of humility, as the God of the universe humbled Himself by taking on flesh, serving all of humanity and dying on the cross (see Philippians 2:1–8). Jesus doesn’t just model gentleness, though. He invites you into His gentleness. He says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30). Living a life that is worthy of your calling in the Lord is a life characterized by modeling the gentleness of Jesus as you live in His gentle care. Though culture defines a life of meekness, humility and gentleness as weakness, Jesus argues that only these will truly prosper in this life because these are the ones that are dependent and submissive to His ways. In other words, you are weak when you fail to be gentle.

**Do you look to Jesus as your model of gentleness?**

**PRAY:** Lord, thank You for being gentle with me and guiding me to a life of gentleness.



## DAY TWENTY-FIVE: GENTLENESS

*Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.*

Galatians 6:1

**THOUGH GENTLENESS** possesses the qualities of patience, kindness, humility and forgiveness, gentleness does not shy away from truth. All sin ruins your relationship with God and causes turbulence in your relationship with others. You need to take your sin seriously. Furthermore, you need to take the sin of believers around you seriously as well. First, consider the “log” of sin in your own life before considering the “speck” of sin in someone else’s life (see Matthew 7:1–5). Ask the Lord to examine your heart and expose your offensive ways (see Psalm 139:23–24). Second, you must learn to speak the truth in love, aspiring to bring light and restoration with all gentleness and humility (see Ephesians 4:15). You should never compromise the truth for the sake of love nor love for the sake of truth. The truth that convicts a sinner is the same truth that can set a sinner free.

**Do you speak the truth with a gentleness?**

**PRAY:** Lord, search my heart and show me my faults. Teach me to uphold Your truth and proclaim it with all gentleness.



## DAY TWENTY-SIX: GENTLENESS

*Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.*

James 3:13

**“HUMILITY” IN THIS VERSE** is the same Greek word translated as “gentleness” in Galatians 5:23. Accordingly, the “good life” is a life overwhelmed by the wisdom of God that results in a posture of humility and gentleness. This kind of life is modeled by John the Baptist. John devoted his life to preparing the way for Jesus. Even as all his followers left him to follow Jesus, John declared, “He must become greater; I must become less” (John 3:30). John understood his role in this life: make much of Jesus. Similarly, wisdom is recognizing that your role in life is to honor and glorify King Jesus. Your words and actions should gently flow from this wisdom. You should aim to lead a quiet life, humbly working to earn the respect of every person you meet as you bear the fruit of His gentleness (see 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12). In doing so, you worship the Lord and you proclaim His name.

### Does your gentleness flow from His wisdom?

**PRAY:** Lord, show me how to live in such a way that my life’s goal is for You to become greater, and I become less.



## DAY TWENTY-SEVEN: SELF-CONTROL

*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.<sup>25</sup> Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.<sup>26</sup> Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air.<sup>27</sup> No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

**THE NINTH AND FINAL FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** from Galatians 5:22-23 is self-control. Self-control is showing restraint in your sinful impulses by developing a mastery over your passions and desires through spiritual disciplines. Though there are only a few instances of this word in the New Testament, the idea of spiritual discipline is prominent. In today's passage, Paul likens the pursuit of Christian self-control to the discipline of an athlete. To win an earthly crown, all athletes must put their body through strict training. He argues that a Christian who lacks self-control is like an athlete who has lost their purpose. You are called to train yourself in godliness (see 1 Timothy 4:7-8). Your Bible reading, prayer time, church attendance, financial giving, service and fasting were never designed to save you. Instead, these examples of Christian activities are equivalent to Christian exercises that keep you alert and disciplined so that you live a life of godly self-control.

**Is your life marked by a godly self-control?**

**PRAY:** Lord, continue to remind me that godly self-control comes from daily submission and discipline to You.



## DAY TWENTY-EIGHT: SELF-CONTROL

*For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.*

### 2 Timothy 1:7

**PAUL WAS ENCOURAGING** this young Pastor named Timothy to own the full weight and responsibility of shepherding God's people. There is no question that the task was overwhelming without God's help. In a similar way, the call to produce all these spiritual fruits is daunting if it is rooted in the personal ability of the believer. However, the Holy Spirit does not produce the fruit of timidity or cowardice. Rather, the Spirit gives you the power to do what you cannot do on your own. He fills you with His love so that you can love in any and every situation, and He gives you wisdom and discernment in this life through self-discipline. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, but it's also a gift from the Spirit. You must learn to depend on the Lord to show you what is wise and pure so that you can live boldly and confidently in His ability in you to oppose sinful indulgences and not your own.

### Do you depend on God to help you show self-control?

**PRAY:** Lord, when I am overwhelmed by my calling to produce spiritual fruit, give me the power, love and self-discipline to live confidently in Your ways.





## DAY TWENTY-NINE: SELF-CONTROL

*For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;<sup>6</sup> and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;<sup>7</sup> and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.<sup>8</sup> For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Peter 1:5-8

### SELF-CONTROL IS FOUND RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

of Peter's call to a virtuous and godly life. This series of Christian characteristics is rooted in God's grace, and the surrounding verses affirm that God has given you everything you need for a godly life in Him (2 Peter 1:3-4). But at the same time, a godly character does not come to be passively. You are called to "make every effort" to "possess these qualities" so that you will be an effective and productive follower of Jesus. Peter said in his previous letter that, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). When you refuse to pursue these disciplines, you let your guard down and become vulnerable to his attacks. All of these traits take an active training to develop and stay sharp in the Lord so that you remain ready to stand your ground when sin tries to entice you.

**Do you actively pursue these godly virtues?**

**PRAY:** Lord, thank You for giving me everything I need to live a godly life in You. Teach me to use those tools so that I may be effective and productive for You.



## DAY THIRTY: THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.<sup>24</sup> Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.<sup>25</sup> Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

Galatians 5:22-25

**RIGHT THINKING LEADS TO RIGHT LIVING.** In the original language, “keep in step with” is a military term related to soldiers marching in sync with their leader. It suggests that in order for you to bear all of these spiritual fruits and conform into the image of Jesus, you must learn to follow the leading of the Spirit. You are called to march behind Him, keeping His cadence and rhythm in your attitude, actions and lifestyle. How do you do this? Put to death the sinful desires of the flesh and live in the new life Christ has given you (see Galatians 2:20). There is no question that this killing of sin is a lifelong battle, but every day, you must consistently and faithfully fix your eyes on Jesus. Be determined to learn His ways and follow His ways by the guiding and leading of the Spirit, and only then will you bear His fruit.

**Are you keeping in step with the Spirit?**

**PRAY:** Lord, help me keep in step with Your Spirit so that I may produce Your fruit!



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