

Lesson 9 | April 28, 2024

The Spirit Produces Love, Joy, Peace

Study Text: Luke 10:17–21; John 14:27; 16:33; Romans 5:1–2; 12:18–21; Galatians 5:22–23; Philippians 4:4–7; Colossians 3:13–15; 1 Thessalonians 1:5–7; 1 John 3:16–18

Central Truth: The Holy Spirit produces love, joy, and peace in the believer.

Key Verse: 1 John 3:18

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth (KJV).

Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions (NLT).

Learning Objectives:

- Students will discover the fruit of the Spirit, in its various expressions, is founded on love.
- Students will recognize true love, joy, and peace are not mere emotions, but Christlike attitudes or dispositions the Spirit produces in believers' lives.
- Students will choose love, joy, and peace.

Introducing the Study

Say: As we dive into our detailed study of the fruit of the Spirit, let's think about the difference between a fruit tree and a Christmas tree. Christmas trees are valuable because of external factors: the ornaments we place on them and the gifts we place under them. Fruit trees, on the other hand, are known for what they produce on their own. Think of the fruit of the Spirit as something that is naturally produced rather than something with which we decide to decorate ourselves. With that in mind, let's walk through God's produce department and start examining the Spirit's fruit.

Opening Activity—Fruit Quiz

Ask: *How many kinds of fruit can you name in sixty seconds?* Give the class one minute to list as many fruits (physical, not spiritual) as they can.

Say: The gifts of the Spirit are expressions of God's grace freely given to meet needs in the church, while the fruit of the Spirit is evidence of personal transformation. A person producing fruit is being changed into the likeness of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Share your highlights from the following text.) ∨ **Play the "Lessons from the Orchard" video—available at [RadiantLifeCurriculum.com/Adult](https://www.RadiantLifeCurriculum.com/Adult).**

Emotions are natural feelings arising from our circumstances—the psychological responses to what's happening to us. Because they are so changeable, they cannot always be trusted.

The fruit of the Spirit, however, describe attitudes the Spirit produces in believers' lives. They are based on what is true about God, our relationship with Him, and His will for us. They naturally grow as we walk in the Spirit day by day.

Part 1—Love by the Spirit

Love Over All

Galatians 5:22–23

Say: What does the Spirit produce in us? What kind of fruit does a life in the Spirit bear? The character of Christ! In just one word, the character of Christ is *love*. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Paul explained how to be controlled by God's Spirit rather than human nature: "Let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves" (Galatians 5:16, NLT). Paul contrasted the two ways of living, explaining that the behavior of the old nature is obvious. Those who practice such things will not share a place in God's kingdom (verses 19–21). But the opposite of these works of the flesh is the fruit of the Spirit. Verse 23 clearly tells us there's no law against any of these fruit! That means when you're following the Spirit's leading, you don't need to worry you might be missing God's mark and doing something wrong.

Interestingly, the original Greek text uses the singular term *fruit* of the Spirit rather than the plural *fruits* of the Spirit. Even the verb in verse 22 is singular: "The fruit of the Spirit *is*" (KJV, emphasis added). Based on this grammatical structure, many New Testament scholars interpret the Spirit's fruit as being preeminently and all-inclusively love. After all, love is the supreme characteristic of God (1 John 4:7–8). If the fruit of the Spirit can be encapsulated under the heading of love, it makes sense this God-given quality would have multiple manifestations in the lives of people being directed by the Spirit. It would sometimes look like patience, sometimes look like gentleness, sometimes look like faithfulness, etc.—but this love would always come from God himself, who "has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love" (Romans 5:5, NLT).

The fruit produced by living in the Spirit is an attitude of love, which pleases God, blesses others, and satisfies our souls. Sidestepping fickle emotions, it results in a settled way of thinking and feeling, which is reflected in our behavior. It results in a point of view that is based on the truth about God and His will for us.

Resource Packet Item 1: The Fruit of the Spirit Is Love

Distribute the worksheet and give students a few minutes to read the poem and Scripture passage. Then discuss the questions as a class.

Discuss

- ? What do you think about the fruit of the Spirit being captured in a single virtue?
- ? Share an example from your life when an attitude of steadfast love would have been much better than an emotional response.

Love Above All

Colossians 3:13–14; 1 John 3:16–18

Say: Not only does love encapsulate the fruit of the Spirit, but love is the number-one priority for a person living a Spirit-led life. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In his letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul exhorted believers to get rid of sinful habits, stripping them off like dirty clothes (Colossians 3:5–9)! Instead, they were to put on new clothes: a Christlike nature that reflected the Creator (verse 10). The list of virtues believers should display looks much like the fruit of the Spirit: “tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience” (verse 12, NLT). We are to patiently forgive one another (verse 13). And above all these other things, we are to put on love! It is the “bond of perfectness” (verse 14, KJV) holding all the virtues together and binding “us all together in perfect harmony” (NLT). Among the many virtues Christians are called to cultivate and produce, love is supreme.

As we have studied already this quarter, John’s epistles reiterate the preeminence of love. Imitating Christ by loving others is nonnegotiable for His followers (1 John 3:16). It is not just a matter of talk but of action; genuine love is demonstrated in deeds of compassion and kindness (verses 17–18).

God’s kind of love—and the kind He asks us to show—is called *agape* in Greek. While *agape* does involve fond affection, it is so much more than fleeting infatuation or a shallow passion that bursts into flame and then dies quickly. It is more than mere self-interest that charms people to get what it wants. *Agape* is not self-centered, but selfless. It assesses and supplies other people’s needs. It is sensitive, yet discerning. After all, a person’s best interest sometimes requires tough love, not spineless enabling. Above all, *agape* is willing to pay any price. Depending on the situation, it may require sacrifice. As our perfect example, Jesus Christ, though equal to God, emptied himself of position and glory. He took the form of a servant, humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death. He made the ultimate sacrifice (Philippians 2:6–9). This is the attitude the Spirit wants to cultivate in us (verse 5). This is the fruit we should produce. Just as our Savior gave up His life for us, “so we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters” (1 John 3:16, NLT). We show the truth of our love by our actions.

Discuss

- ? Why do you think love is the supreme virtue?
- ? Give an example of sacrificial love you have experienced or observed.

Part 2—Joy by the Spirit

Joy in Affliction and Suffering

1 Thessalonians 1:5–7

Say: “Joy is love exulting.”¹ The Holy Spirit produces the holy disposition of joy—a celebration of God’s love that transcends temporary heartache or trouble. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Paul’s Thessalonian correspondence was written to a congregation of new believers. Not only were they experiencing rugged persecution for their faith, but after preaching to them, Paul himself had been driven out of town by their persecutors (see Acts 17:5–10). The Thessalonian believers received the message of Christ with joy from the Spirit, despite the suffering it had brought them. Their courageous, joyful response made them examples to other believers (1 Thessalonians 1:5–7).

Joy in affliction, suffering, pain, and persecution is not the natural response! But consider the difference between joy and happiness.

Happiness is circumstantial—the emotional response to something that is perceived as positive. People pursue things they think will make them happy. But studies show that people driven by external rewards like wealth and status tend to be less happy than people who prioritize things with intrinsic worth, like faith and family relationships. The Thessalonians’ commitment to Jesus had changed everything! They knew they were loved, forgiven, and accepted by God. They had hope beyond persecution and death. They loved God more than everything in this world, even their lives. As a result, they had joy!

Joy is an attitude the Spirit produces in the lives of believers. “Joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17, KJV) is an essential mark of Kingdom life. This joy is a spiritual disposition based on what is true about God, our relationship with Him, and His will for our lives. That’s why people who walk in the Spirit are not enslaved to their emotions or captive to their circumstances.

Discuss

- ? What aspect of God’s nature inspires celebration for you today?
- ? Tell of a time you experienced joy in the Holy Ghost in the midst of affliction.

Joy in Mission and Salvation

Luke 10:17–21

Say: Finding your purpose and place in God’s mission is a source of great fulfillment and joy. And finding peace with God brings the greatest joy imaginable! (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Having purpose and meaning in life increases both physical and mental health. Jewish psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, who survived multiple Nazi concentration camps during World War II, observed in his memoir, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, that the prisoners who

1. Dr. Kenneth Moynagh (1913–1972), “The Fruit of the Spirit Is Love,” accessed November 10, 2022, stornowayfreechurch.com/news/poem-on-love-by-dr-kenneth-moynagh-1913-1972.

survived were the ones who could identify a reason to live. Studies show that finding meaning in life is one of nine factors generally leading to a long, healthy life. Meaning and purpose are intrinsic motivators, bringing health and happiness.

Returning from their first evangelistic mission, the seventy² apostles were overjoyed (Luke 10:17). They had been commissioned, they had served faithfully, and they had witnessed the power of Jesus' name. Jesus rejoiced with them, sharing His own testimony of power over the enemy (verse 18).

Then, Jesus encouraged His disciples to shift the focus of their rejoicing. "Don't rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven" (verse 20, NLT). Belonging to God is the ultimate reason for joy! Even the mission of God is secondary in importance to that. Since working for God includes both successes and failures—people who respond to the message and people who reject it—rejoicing in our work for God is not enough. Instead, we must rejoice in our relationship with God.

Verse 21 records Jesus himself rejoicing in the Holy Spirit, providing the perfect example for us. He thanked the Father for hiding the treasures of His truth from "those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike" (NLT). It pleased the Father to set things up this way, so that humble people are in the best position to discover His grace.

The Christian life is not comprised of knowing theology, understanding philosophy, mastering biblical languages, and grasping Church history. It does not consist of knowing about Christ, but knowing Christ himself. A relationship with Jesus does not require human intellect and earthly wisdom, but spiritual hunger and heavenly grace. Watching God's grace in action makes Jesus rejoice. For God's children, receiving and reciprocating His love, experience joy in the form of exultant (or jubilant) love. God finds joy in giving, Jesus finds joy in the transaction, and we find joy in receiving grace and living in relationship with Him.

Discuss

- ? Describe a time when you experienced joy while participating in God's mission.
- ? How can you joyfully celebrate the relationship you have with Jesus?

Resource Packet Item 2: Rejoice in the Lord Always

Distribute the worksheet and divide the class into small groups. Assign a few Scriptures to each group, and give students a few minutes to list the reasons for rejoicing. Then discuss the results and the reflection question together.

Part 3—Peace by the Spirit

Peace in Your Heart

2. Some translations (including NLT) say "seventy-two."

John 16:33; Colossians 3:15; Romans 5:1–2

Say: “Peace is love at rest.”³ The deepest peace any person can find is peace with God. When we know we are loved by Him, we enjoy peace that is immovable. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Jesus’ conversation with His disciples during the Last Supper is recorded in John 14–17. In it, Jesus explained He was leaving and the *Paraclete* was coming in His place. The disciples were to remain in Jesus: in His words and in His love. They would be persecuted, but He promised the *Paraclete* would be with them. Then Jesus prayed for them—and for us.

Just before praying, Jesus said, “I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world” (John 16:33, NLT). Jesus was honest with His friends. Life on earth has struggles. Living for Jesus will not always be easy. But just imagine Jesus saying, “Let’s be honest: This world is gonna clobber you. But I have already conquered the world. So, chin up. Take courage. Find your peace in Me!”

Paul gave insight into how to practice peace, saying, “Let the peace of God rule your hearts” (Colossians 3:15, KJV). The Greek word translated “rule” in this verse is not the typical word one used for a king’s rule. Instead, it is a word that only appears once in the New Testament and refers to someone who presided over or arbitrated public games. So, picture peace as an umpire standing behind the home plate of your heart. You are at bat, hoping to get a good hit. The enemy of your soul is on the mound trying his best to strike you out. Peace is there to call the pitches on your behalf. In fact, he makes the call for you even before you swing. When the enemy pitches condemnation toward your heart, peace calls out, “Low and outside!” so you know not to take a swing. When the enemy pitches fear, anxiety, anger, or desolation, peace shouts, “Ball—way outside!” encouraging you to let those lies fly past.

Paul explained peace with God theologically in Romans 5:1–11. Christ’s work coupled with our faith makes us right with God and grants us access to grace. We now stand rejoicing in hope as we look forward to sharing God’s glory. This reconciliation—this restoration of our relationship with God—is why we can rest. Peace is love at rest.

Discuss

- ? In what ways do Jesus’ words in John 16:33 prepare you for the future?
- ? What thoughts pitched at your heart does peace warn you not to swing at?

Peace in Your Life

John 14:27; Romans 12:18–21; Philippians 4:4–7

3. Moynagh.

Say: Not only do we have peace with God—certain of our position in Him—but as His love works through us, we can also live peaceably with others. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Like the contrast between joy and happiness, there is a difference between biblical peace and the world's concept of peace. The world defines peace as the absence of conflict, which means it only lasts as long as things remain calm. But the peace Jesus gives is not like that (John 14:27). In fact, God's peace transcends our understanding (Philippians 4:7). This kind of peace is based on the Hebrew concept of *shalom*, which includes well-being, completeness, wholeness, flourishing, and prosperity. *Shalom* is both the condition and the outcome of living in right relationship with God.

To have *shalom* is to have life in Christ, with God, and by the Spirit. Right relationship with God results in steadfast well-being that transcends temporary trials. God's peace is not the absence of conflict; it's His presence in the midst of it! The world's peace—freedom from disturbance—is fragile. One tiny problem arises, and the illusion of peace is shattered. But God's peace is resilient (constantly bouncing back) and transcendent (soaring above our circumstances). The world doesn't give us this peace, so the world can't take it away! When we've experienced the love of God and know His absolute power, we can live with *shalom*—the firm conviction that if all's well between me and my sovereign God, I can face anything out there in the world.

Not only does the Holy Spirit give us peace with God, but His fruit in our lives leads to peace with others as well. The *shalom* in our hearts is manifested in the way we interact with others. We are called to release revenge, respond to evil with goodness, be considerate in all we do, abandon worry, and pray with thanksgiving (Romans 12:18–21; Philippians 4:4–6). All the while, God's *shalom* is protecting our hearts and minds as we live in Christ Jesus (verse 7).

Discuss

- ? Tell of a time you experienced God's presence in the midst of a conflict.
- ? What truth about God gives you peace in a current challenging situation?

Resource Packet Item 3: Peace (Cinquain Poem)

Distribute the worksheet and give students a few minutes to reflect and write the poem as instructed. Ask a few volunteers to share their poems.

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: Love, joy, and peace are not mere emotions, but Christlike attitudes the Spirit produces in our lives. The fruit of the Spirit in its various expressions is grounded on believers' absolute confidence in the unconditional love of God. As they intentionally seek to stay in step with the Spirit, He produces evidence they are walking with Christ.

Living It Out Ministry in Action

- Choose to live in God’s love and share it with others.
- Choose to live in the joy of the Holy Ghost—even in affliction—by celebrating what is true about God, your relationship with Him, and His will for your life.
- Choose to live in peace, knowing it is well with your soul.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Love God Wholeheartedly.
Deuteronomy 10:12–22

Tuesday:

Love Your Neighbor.
Leviticus 19:11–18

Wednesday:

Joy Expressed.
Psalm 66:1–6

Thursday:

Joy in Heaven.
Luke 15:1–10

Friday:

Christ Gives Peace.
John 14:22–29

Saturday:

Peace with God.
Romans 5:1–11