

## ...feeling fruity?

### ...fruit of the spirit : love, joy and peace

thegap, the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 2005

How many times have you read/heard/gone ‘oh rubbish, I’m nothing like that...’ at this passage? Probably quite a few? “Fruits of the spirit” is part of the lovely Christian vocabulary we’re happy to use to make ourselves sound smart, but have you got a clue what it’s all about? Read on... And pay attention, there’ll be a test...no, actually, there won’t...

**somebody pray** that God will speak to the group through His Bible.  
**then go read Galatians 5:16-26:**

**Life by the Spirit : NIV**

<sup>16</sup>So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. <sup>17</sup>For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. <sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

<sup>19</sup>The acts of the sinful nature 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.

<sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, 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 sinful nature with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

**The Message** (hey, two versions...don’t say I’m not good to you...)

<sup>16</sup>My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God’s Spirit. Then you won’t feed the compulsions of selfishness. <sup>17</sup>For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness. These two ways of life are antithetical, so that you cannot live at times one way and at times another way according to how you feel on any given day. <sup>18</sup>Why don’t you choose to be led by the Spirit and so escape the erratic compulsions of a law-dominated existence? <sup>19</sup>It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; <sup>20</sup>trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; <sup>21</sup>the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on.

This isn’t the first time I have warned you, you know. If you use your freedom this way, you will not inherit God’s kingdom.

<sup>22</sup>But what happens when we live God’s way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, <sup>23</sup>not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.

Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way. <sup>24</sup>Among those who belong to Christ, everything connected with getting our own way and mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities is killed off for good—crucified.

<sup>25</sup>Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives. <sup>26</sup>That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original.

- Compare v19-21 to v22-23. Look at v17 as well. (Go on, multitask...) If the two ways are contrary, why do we so often feel like we’re messing up and not good enough?
- Why are the attributes of living a God-centred described as fruit? The word’s dropped in kind of out of context - there’s no mention of trees, so why does Paul talk about fruit? What’s required to produce healthy fruit?
- Notice that it’s singular “fruit”, not “fruits”. Noticed that before? What are the implications? Can you have love due to the Spirit but not peace? In that case, why are some Christians very kind but incredibly impatient?
- Why’s this fruit so important? Check out Matt 12:33...

## read 1 John 4:7-21

### God's Love and Ours

<sup>7</sup>Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

<sup>8</sup>Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup>This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup>Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup>No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

<sup>13</sup>We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup>And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. <sup>15</sup>If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. <sup>16</sup>And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. <sup>17</sup>In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. <sup>18</sup>There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

<sup>19</sup>We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup>If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup>And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

- Oh, go on, let's just define the whole shebang. It's the favourite topic of films, songs, books and most people seem to be chasing after this elusive concept. Note that there are 23 mentions of "love" in this passage in the NIV (if I can count)...looks like we're supposed to be quite serious about the whole idea, really... What exactly is love, then? May as well start with 1 Cor 13... How does it differ from the worldly view of love?
- What does love require from us?
- If love comes from God, can a non-Christian really love?
- Look at v12. How does other people's love point us to God? (Might want to flip back to the last question on the previous page...) Do you feel loved by Christians you know? How about non-Christians?
- Have a squizz at v16. It says we know and rely on God's love. How can we rely on such an invisible and yet tangible thing? (v13-15)
- How can we practically love? Look at v19-21. Then look at John 15:1-16.
- How do we respond to God's love by loving? How about Matt 25:34-40?

## joy : a prize to the first person to find a lyric about joy...

How do you define joy? We often use it sarcastically ("Oh, joy..."), but when else do you think about joy? Do you? Is it just being happy all the time? Apparently, the word's used 60 times in the New Testament...

## read Phil 4:4-9

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup>Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things. <sup>9</sup>Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

- Look at Luke 24:36-53. Talk about a time to be joyful... How about Philipians? How's Paul's situation as a background for joy? Where's Paul? Look at v12-14... How does that change your definition of joy?
- Look at v8. Where does joy find its focus?
- Look at John 15:9-11 again... How are love and joy related?
- What does a practical definition of joy mean for the way you go about life?
- Can joy be contained? If not, what are the implications?

## peace : like a river...

We tend to think of peace in terms of what the media tells us it's not. We see wars splattered all over our screens and papers and hear of peace as the inverse of war. So what's the Bible got to say about how we're meant to be peaceful?

### read Isaiah 43:1-7

<sup>1</sup> But now, this is what the LORD says- he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. <sup>2</sup> When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. <sup>3</sup> For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. <sup>4</sup> Since you are precious and honoured in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life. <sup>5</sup> Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. <sup>6</sup> I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth- <sup>7</sup> everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

- There's a "but" at the start of this- read back and find out why... How does that turn our conventional idea of peace on its head?
- How does the passage convey God's relationship with Israel? The same God of this passage calls us His children through Christ's death on the cross. Look at Romans 5:1,10. How's our relationship with God portrayed?
- Put in context, what does God's peace as we're meant to experience it really mean? Clearly, it doesn't just mean that we'll be free from adversity and attack (v2).
- Read v5. Then read Psalm 23:4. Then read Matt 28:20b. Feeling peaceful?
- How do we develop intimate relationships with people? How then do we develop an intimate relationship like this one with God? Go on, go back to Phil 4:4-9 again, off you go...
- If we're supposed to be peaceful, why do we worry so much? Have a look at Matt 6:25-34. How's your anxiety doing these days?
- How about peace with other people? How do we develop that? Try Romans 12:19-21...
- Does peace mean passivity? What do the passages we've looked at have to say about that?
- Look at Colossians 3:15.

so then...

...feeling fruity?

respond to what God's got to say...

Being Christians means we have the Spirit, and the Spirit helps us bear fruit. But it's a continual process; we're not expected to attain perfection overnight! Maybe you need to ask God to help you grow in Him, or maybe all this is a reminder to you of His grace, love and provision. And there's a lot to respond to!

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The ongoing Tsunami situation still needs prayer, although it's rapidly disappearing from our TV screens. Although it's hard to see God in the midst of suffering, He's there. Pray that God will use aid workers to provide comfort and help to those affected by the tragedy. Pray for comfort to those who have lost friends and family. Pray that God will be seen through Christians in the situation. Pray that the Western world will offer appropriate, ongoing help, that financial aid would be used wisely and honestly, and that the debt situation can be improved to help provide funds for relief. Pray also for Alyson Wright, who is travelling to Sri Lanka to help in emergency pharmacy.

For more fruit of the spirit-related things: [http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec\\_outlines/fs.htm](http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec_outlines/fs.htm) has lots more things. Including Greek, if that's your bag...