

Abundance

BEARING FRUIT FOR EVERY GOOD WORK

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A STUDY OF GALATIANS 5:22-23

DARLENE SCHACHT

TIME-WARP WIFE MINISTRIES



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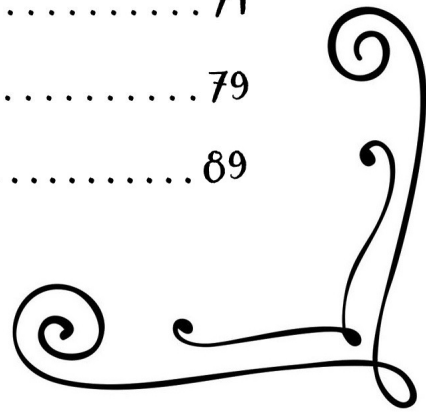
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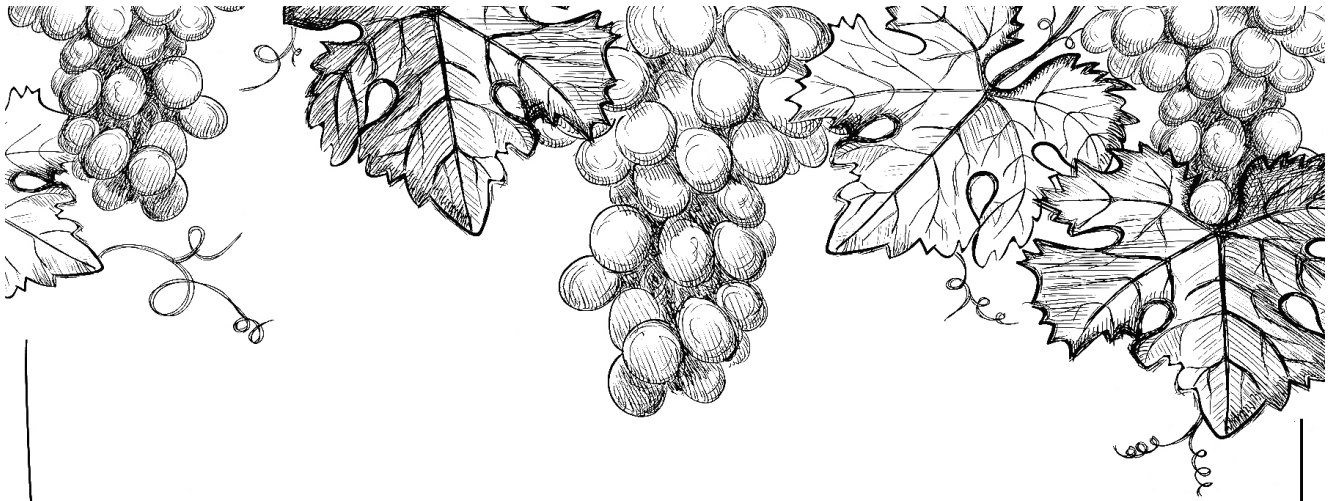
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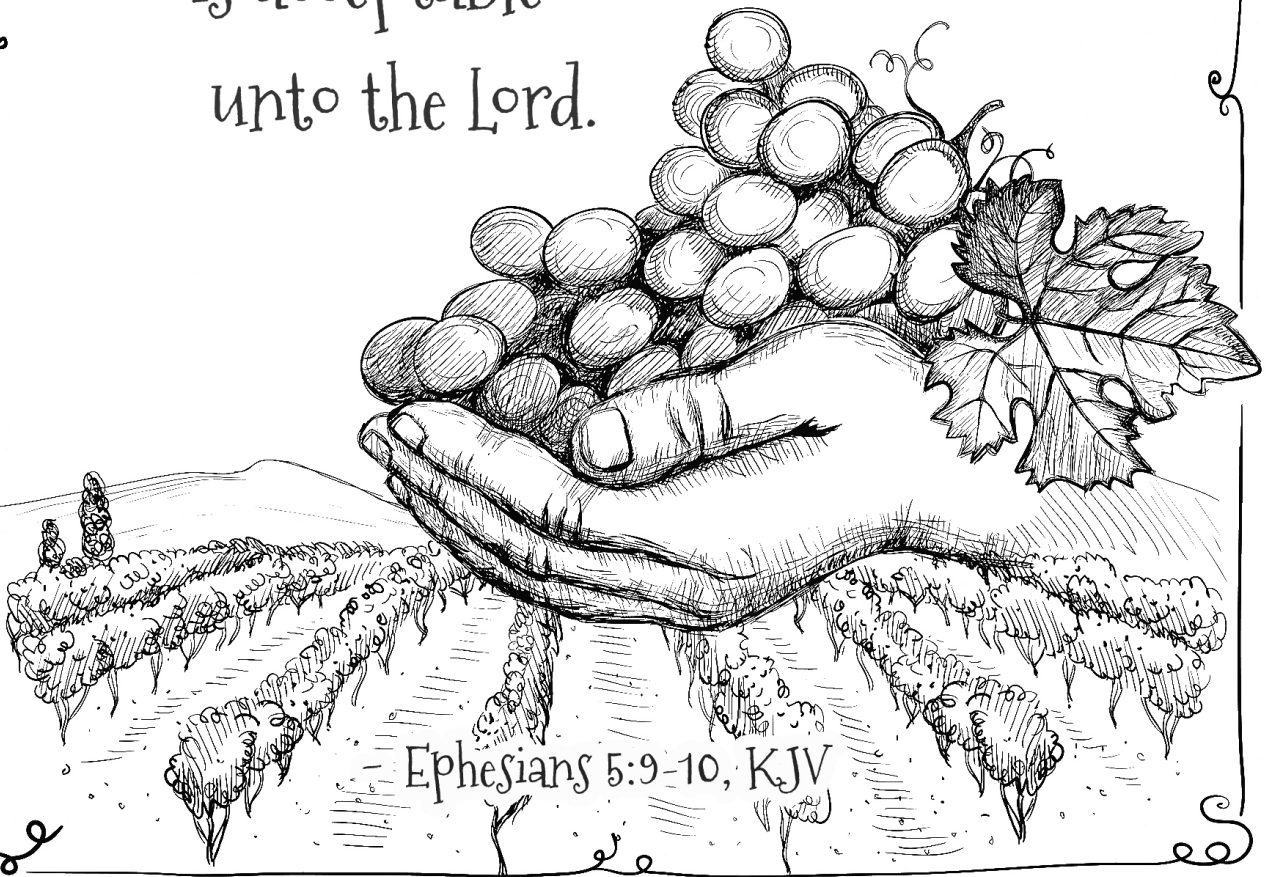
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For the fruit of the Spirit is in
all goodness and righteousness
and truth; proving what
is acceptable
unto the Lord.



Ephesians 5:9-10, KJV

Good Timber

by Douglas Malloch

The tree that never had to fight
For sun and sky and air and light,
But stood out in the open plain
And always got its share of rain,
Never became a forest king
But lived and died a scrubby thing.

The man who never had to toil
To gain and farm his patch of soil,
Who never had to win his share
Of sun and sky and light and air,
Never became a manly man
But lived and died as he began.

Good timber does not grow with ease:
The stronger wind, the stronger trees;
The further sky, the greater length;
The more the storm, the more the strength.

By sun and cold, by rain and snow,
In trees and men good timbers grow.
Where thickest lies the forest growth,
We find the patriarchs of both.
And they hold counsel with the stars
Whose broken branches show the scars
Of many winds and much of strife.
This is the common law of life.



1 - INTRODUCTION



When I got to thinking about our next study, I knew that it had to be on the fruit of the Spirit. After all, can't we all use a little more love, joy, and peace? Do we really need to wait until Christmas to have it, or could it be that God wants us to live an abundant life right here and right now? Not a situation where everything is handed to us, where we're living it up on Easy Street, but rather a sense of contentment and joy found in Christ alone.

Paul says, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." It's easy to be content when everything is going our way, but is that really contentment if we're happy one minute and discouraged the next? The reason the fruit of the Spirit is satisfying is that it blooms from within. It's not dependant on the shifting circumstances around us, but rather a firm hope in an unchanging God. I often say, "The same God Who brought me this far will bring me much further yet."

Galatians chapter 5 dictates what fruit we should bear. The Amplified Bible outlines them well:

But the fruit of the Spirit [the result of His presence within us] is love [unselfish concern for others], joy, [inner] peace, patience [not the ability to wait, but how we act while waiting], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23, Amplified Bible)

If creation itself can bear fruit that is good for The Master, can't we? It's a shame when an apple tree produces more fruit in a year than its owner, but it doesn't have to be that way. When we walk with the Lord, and delight in His will, we will produce fruit in abundance.

≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

There's a famous tree known as "The Tree of 40 Fruit." Of course this masterpiece was grafted together by human hands, but even so, it's incredible what you can accomplish with a little time and patience.

In Mark 11:12-14 we see Jesus cursing a barren fruit tree. Some people are confused when they read this since Mark also mentions that it wasn't the season for figs. Here's where the problem lies: there were leaves on the tree giving Jesus the impression that there would also be fruit. Now I'm not sure exactly what the leaves would look like during fruit season, but I do see that Jesus saw it from a distance. In simple terms, author David Guzik describes this as "false advertising." John the Baptist called out the Pharisees saying that they must bear fruit in keeping with repentance. The idea here is that the tree, like many today, was representing itself one way and living another.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. (Matthew 3:7-9, KJV)

There are a few ways in which fruit and vegetables differ, one of the main ways however is that a fruit will always bear seeds. It's for this reason that a banana is generally considered a berry and strawberries are considered to be a fruit.

Merriam Webster writes, "Anything that grows on a plant and is the means by which that plant gets its seeds out into the world is a fruit."

By this, we see a parallel to the divine purpose of fruit. While it makes for a wonderful life, it's not all that it does. As we're bearing fruit, we're sowing seeds that draw others to Christ. The Bible says whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly. And so, we must be fruitful in every good work. Walking in a manner that is worthy of our calling. Living in such a way that is pleasing to God.

So that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God. (Colossians 1:10, NIV)

As we embark on this study, let's begin by taking a look at the tree, the root system, and the source of our strength. For fruit is nothing without the tree from which it is born. If the tree is bad, and if our root system is weak, the fruit of that tree will suffer.

It only makes sense that fruit comes from a tree doesn't it? After all, the cross (also referred to as a tree in scripture) takes center stage in our faith. Without the tree there would be no salvation, there would be no resurrection,

The Fruit of the Spirit

and there would be no reconciliation with God. Everything we do stems from our faith in Christ and His work on the cross.

≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

A tree can only live and bear fruit if it has enough water. This represents the believer being nourished by the Word of God.

Looking to Exodus chapter 15, we see the Israelites traveling in the wilderness when they happened upon a well of bitter water at Marah. We can only imagine how horribly bitter it must have been if they went three days without water and still couldn't drink it.

So, what does God do? He tells Moses to cast a tree into the water. When Moses does, the water is made sweet. Do you see the analogy there? Do you see what makes the bitter sweet? The tree on which our Savior hung: the cross. There's transforming power in the message of the cross, and when that cross takes center stage in the heart of man, it makes the bitter sweet.

Charles Spurgeon writes, "The cross in the heart is the purifier of the soul; it purges and it cleanses the chambers of the mind. Christian! keep thy heart pure, for out of it are the issues of life."

≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

Some believe the well at Marah was intentionally poisoned (made bitter) to deprive the Israelites of clean drinking water. This was a common practice in Old Testament times.

The first thing to understand is that a tree doesn't go searching for fruit. It produces fruit from within. When the tree is healthy, the fruit is healthy. Its job is to drink in the water, to soak in the sun, and to stretch forth its roots. The deeper the roots, the stronger the plant, which is why mature trees stand firm in the wind.

Those who seek to find joy apart from their faith are like branches that long to bear fruit apart from the vine. But when we abide in Christ and He in us, it's a natural extension of growing in grace.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:33, KJV)

"All these things" include love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control... abundant fruit of a life that abides in the vine.

Here's an interesting fact: a species of fig (*Ficus*, family *Moraceae*) from the Transvaal of South Africa was determined to have roots reaching at least 400 feet. (Encyclopedia.com) You

won't see that tree break and bend in the wind! So it is with those who are grounded in Christ. They're the ones strengthened by the winds of adversity. The ones with deep seated roots, who stand firm in the eye of a storm.

Anne Graham Lotz once wrote, "Faith is like a tender plant, rooted in Christ alone, watered by the Spirit and the Word, strengthened by the winds of adversity and the sunshine of blessing."

After hearing that quote, I got to wondering if trees were in fact strengthened by wind. Could it be that they're building muscle in the same way that we do? Was resistance training the key?

And then I happened upon an article about "The Biosphere 2," an experimental ecological facility built in the late 80s by the University of Arizona. This enormous ecological system (spanning 40 acres) was complete with its own rain forest, wetlands, fog desert, farmland, and ocean. What caught my attention the most in all of this wasn't the fact that it had its own ocean. I mean, that was pretty amazing, but even more amazing than that was the fact that the trees were weakened by a lack of stress wood which is normally created in resistance to wind. (Source: Wikipedia – Biosphere 2)

Who would have thought? You eliminate the wind, and you eliminate the tree's natural ability to be strengthened by it.

In the same way, we're strengthened every time we exercise faith against the winds of adversity. Every time we choose love over hate, peace over stress, kindness over anger, and joy over disappointment we're exercising a life that produces good fruit. We're building the resistance muscles that we need to stand strong in our faith.

<p>What is the true meaning of patience?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>What makes the bitter sweet, and how?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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What is the difference between fruit and vegetables, and why is it important?



Fill in the Blanks:

And he shall be like a _____ by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his _____ in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. (Psalm 1:3, KJV)

The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the _____ yieldeth fruit. (Proverbs 12:12, KJV)

Why did Jesus curse the fig tree in Mark 11?



As the business of the soldier is
to fight, so the business of the
Christian is to be like Christ.
- Jonathan Edwards -



When Jesus explains the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:18-23,
what does He say about the seeds that fall on good soil?

What do you think the soil represents in this parable?

What happens to trees that are not exposed to the wind?



Mountaintops are for views
and inspiration, but fruit is
grown in the valleys.
- Billy Graham -



We learned how trees are strengthened by the stresses of the wind.
Can you remember a time when you were strengthened by the winds of adversity?
What did you learn through that trial?

Which fruit of the Spirit do you feel
are most evident in your life?

Which fruit would you most like to see
grow in your life?



2 - LOVE

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, He told His disciples that he would be going away, and then He left them with this closing thought, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:34, KJV)

The world should know that we’re Christians by our love, but the sad thing is that some days we’re not all that recognizable. Sure, they might see that we go to church, that we listen to worship music, that we carry our Bibles around in our purse, or that we homeschool our kids. But do they know that we are Christians by our love? Do they see us humbly putting others before ourselves? Do they hear us speaking kindly? Do they see us serving others?

If actions speak louder than words, imagine the potential that love has to not only preach the gospel, but to shout it from the rooftops loud and clear.

When we see the word “love,” in Galatians 5:22, Paul’s not talking about the kind of love that you might have for your car or your coffee. He’s talking about reflecting the unconditional love of our Lord.

Agape love is a gift, it’s not something that’s earned, or purchased, or gained by good will. It reaches down and it gives without expectation. The Bible teaches us the depth of God’s love when it says,

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:7-8, KJV)

≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

The word agape is found in the New Testament more than 200 times.

I had a friend once who would wisely say, “I don’t like this person all that much, so I need to get to know them better.” And he did, because he knew that loving doesn’t always come easy to us.

It takes effort to love those we disagree with, and to enjoy the company of those who are different from us—the ones that do and say things that rub us the wrong way. But here’s the thing, if we’re only loving the good ones, then we’re loving to get something back. Maybe it’s a good

time, maybe it's a laugh, maybe it's a sense of security... Whatever the payback is will never compare to the reward of loving our enemies as we give ourselves over to God. Pure and unadulterated love cares first and asks questions later.

If we're only seeking an emotional love, we're missing out on extraordinary love. This is the love that sent Jesus to the cross: an incomparable love that gives without getting and offers grace to the sinner. A fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Looking to the Bible, we see story after story of agape love in action. Remember the story of Joseph? In Genesis chapter 37, we see that his brothers threw him into a pit before selling him off to traveling merchants, simply because they were jealous of him. By all accounts one would expect Joseph to be angry at his brothers, and perhaps even turn them away in their time of need. After all, they betrayed Joseph, and spitefully set out to destroy him. And yet, later on in the story we see that Joseph forgave his brothers, welcomed them into his home, and gave them a place at his table. Not because they deserved it, but because he knew that he was called to love as God loves. The fruit of the Spirit comes from within, not without. And so, love is not dependent upon our circumstances—it's a response to our love for God. It's for this reason that someone like Joseph is able to love those who hurt him.

Agape love goes hand in hand with grace. Logic tells us that love is earned, the cross shows us that love is a gift. It doesn't make sense to the ungodly. It's foolishness to the self-righteous who think they should earn it. It goes against our desire to be recognized for what we've done and loved for who we are. But to the sinner who understands the depth of his sin, it's everything. We've been forgiven much, therefore we have much to forgive.

≡ DID YOU KNOW ≡

The Latin translation of agape in the Vulgate [Latin version of the Bible] is usually *caritas*, which in older Bibles is sometimes translated "charity."
(newworldencyclopedia.org)

Looking to the New Testament, we find another story of beautiful unconditional love in The Parable of the Prodigal Son. As you may already know, it's a story about a man who had two sons. The younger of the two asked for his inheritance. After his father gave it to him, he left home and squandered every penny he had. When he finally hit rock bottom, the prodigal son returned home to his father.

As we read about two brothers in this story, we see that the prodigal son understood the power of grace, after he realized the depth of his sin. He

Let us Love One Another

knew where he had been and what he had done, saying, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” (Luke 15:21)

On the other hand, the elder son, as good as he was, failed to understand grace. He saw the love and kindness of his father as something to be earned. “And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.” (Luke 15:29, KJV)

What neither of them understood is that their father’s love was unconditional. It didn’t matter what they had done—he loved them just the same. Even after the son left and squandered his wealth he was welcomed home with open arms. In fact, the Bible tells us that while he was still off in the distance, the father ran to meet him.

If we love others expecting a reward, payback, or response, we’ll be met with disappointment time and again. One of the biggest mistakes we can make is to expect a reward for our love, or to measure the success of our efforts by another’s response. Jesus loved us. What He got in return was rejection that led to His death. Love has no reward in and of itself, for every perfect gift comes from the Father.

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. (Colossians 3:23-24, KJV)

We’re not here to serve man. We’re here to serve God, and so we love because He first loved us. When that’s our only motive and incentive, love makes sense.

As we read through scripture, we see how humble love truly is. We see how it’s unlike anything we’ll find in this world. It doesn’t make sense to most people, because it goes against our natural desire to seek our own well-being before that of another. We come out of the womb screaming. We want to be loved, we want to be held, we want to be fed, and we want to be seen. But as we grow we learn how to love, how to hold, how to see and feed others. We learn how it’s more important to give than it is to receive. We learn that patience and kindness doesn’t always come easy, but that it’s always well worth the work.



What is the mark of a true disciple?

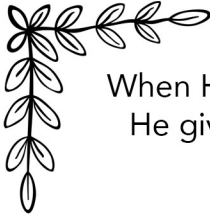
Matthew 3:8 (NIV) says, "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance."
What do you think that means?

According to 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, list 7 things that love is (or does).

List 8 things love isn't (or doesn't do):

According to Matthew 5:44, what are four ways we should respond to our enemies?

Read “The Parable of the Prodigal Son” in Luke 15:11-32. What are some things we can learn from the father in this story about the way we treat others?



When He tells us to love our enemies,
He gives along with the command,
the love itself.

- Corrie Ten Boom -





Is there someone that you have a difficult time getting along with?
What are some ways you can love them?

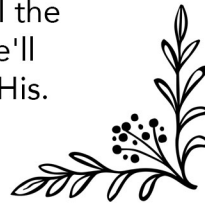
Fill in the Blanks:

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt _____ with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt _____ . (Matthew 22:37-39, KJV)

And over all these virtues _____, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Colossians 3:14, NIV)



God always allows us to feel the frailty of human love so we'll appreciate the strength of His.
- C.S.Lewis -



What can we learn about love and forgiveness from Joseph? (See Genesis 45:5)

What did Joseph do after he revealed himself to his brothers? (See Genesis 45:15)



Love is to the heart what the summer is
to the farmer's year. It brings to harvest
all the loveliest flowers of the soul.

- Billy Graham -



A joyful heart is good medicine, But a broken spirit dries up the bones.

~ Proverbs 17:22, NASB

