



The Garden View

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Harvesting the Fruits of the Spirit

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“Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control,” these all sound like pretty desirable characteristics, don’t they? Maybe even perfectionistic, when we list them all together like that. These are the fruits that the Holy Spirit is promised to produce, if we allow it to work in our lives.

And yet, as great as they sound, these concepts can sometimes seem abstract and generic. It can be difficult to imagine what they really look like in our lives. I’ve attempted to get really specific with these below and I hope you’ll take some time to reflect on what they could mean to you, personally, as well.

“A deeply bonded friendship, a spontaneous overflow of fulfillment, a feeling of security despite threatening conflict, an ability to endure long periods of uncertain waiting, being cared for and caring for others, integrity that makes you feel altogether whole, understanding that transcends criticism and doubt, a soft and subtle presence to others, and disciplined regulation that maintains an alignment to your higher values, not subject to the changing winds of circumstance.” Now *that* sounds like a life worth living. That sounds like a healthy harvest of spiritual fruit I can readily identify with.

When we think of a healthy harvest, we think of crops that are hardy, bountiful, and abundant. We imagine a field overflowing with the end goal fruits and vegetables for which we’ve toiled and labored for months. It is a time of celebration, a culmination of our cultivation, our plans have come to fruition and we have plenty.

A harvest such as this does not simply happen by coincidence. It is what we call a result: a result of hard work and perseverance. What Paul pleads to us in this famous scripture in Galatians is that all of our choices and actions have consequences; they produce results of some nature. It is up to us to decide the nature from which they stem.

This puts us on a path, of sorts, we can choose sin, which we know leads to a path of destruction and suffering, or we can choose life, which inspires growth that leads to a harvest of love, joy, and peace in our lives as described above. This does not guarantee that growth will be easy. The promise is that growth will be fruitful.

But this type of growing isn’t just about following rules. Paul makes it clear that man-made laws and regulations aren’t enough to litigate the spiritual world. It’s tempting to think we can live a pretty good life just by being a good person. But the not-so-secret ingredient to a truly flourishing life is a full on surrender of our sinful nature and an allegiance to follow the Holy Spirit. Inviting Jesus into our lives brings the true type of fruit we are pursuing. And he isn’t just speaking of these fruits in some far off version of Heaven; he means the fruit for our lives *right now*.

Galatians 5:22-26 NIV

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

