

Christ Creates Holy Living

Bible Background • [Galatians 5:18–6:10](#)

Printed Text • [Galatians 5:18–6:10](#)

Devotional Reading • [Romans 6:1–11](#)

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: DEFINE the characteristics Paul lists as the fruit of the Spirit; SENSE the needs of others in the church; and WORK, by the Spirit's empowerment, for the good of all, especially the family of faith.



Since the day they met in high school, Cassandra and Lisa had been best friends. At proms, birthdays, and college, they were inseparable. As adults, they started going to church together and became Christians at the same time. Lisa, who had always been more outgoing, immediately started serving in church auxiliaries while Cassandra shied away from getting to know their new church family. Although Lisa was making new friends, she and Cassandra had become even closer because they now shared a deep love for Christ. When Lisa got married and moved away, Cassandra felt so alone and started to isolate herself. She began to feel like God had abandoned her. Lisa could hear the sadness in Cassandra's voice whenever they'd talk on the phone and was deeply concerned. She called her friend Betty at the church and asked her to pray for Cassandra. Betty and a few other women from the church prayed. Then she and the others stopped by Cassandra's home to let her know they'd been thinking about her. To this day, Cassandra, Betty, and the other women still meet weekly for prayer and support. Cassandra's Christian walk is stronger than ever because her fellow believers reached out to her in love.

Today's lesson examines the fruit of the Spirit and how it is manifested in our lives. How can you discern the fruit of the Spirit in your own life?

Keep in Mind

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” ([Galatians 5:22–23](#)).

KJV

Galatians 5:18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

NLT

Galatians 5:18 But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

19 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures,

20 idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division,

21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

22 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.

25 Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

26 Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.

6:1 Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.

2 Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

3 If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.

4 Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else.

5 For we are each responsible for our own conduct.

6 Those who are taught the word of God should provide for their teachers, sharing all good things with them.

7 Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant.

8 Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.

9 So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.

10 Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

The People, Places, and Times

Fruit. Most of the time, we cannot recognize a fruit from only its seed. Only after seeds are planted in the ground and start sprouting do we know what type of fruit has been planted. Fruit is used metaphorically in Scripture to illustrate this fact. We do not know the power at work in people's lives until we see the fruit that power produces. In Scripture, fruit (works or deeds) is the sign of God's power moving within a person. Sin produces fruit (works) of the flesh, but the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of believers.

Sowing and reaping. Agrarian societies, like that of the first-century church, relied on sowing and reaping crops for subsistence. For this reason, agricultural metaphors were often used to illustrate biblical truths. The farming process was grueling. Farmers had to properly till (break up the soil) hard and rocky land to get a healthy harvest. After the seeds were sown, the land had to be watered and the sprouting crops pruned. Watering was not an easy task. Although fields were located near water sources, farmers mostly relied on the rainy season twice a year (fall and spring) to water their crops. While waiting patiently to reap the harvest, farmers had to contend with drought, weeds, and all manner of pests. Because they did not live on farms but in nearby villages, farmers had to worry about thieves stealing crops while they were away. Although the farmer's life was arduous, his or her prize was finally reaping the harvest. The Galatians truly understood the patience it took to “not be weary in well doing for in due season we shall reap if we faint not” ([Galatians 6:9](#)).

Background

The Roman government viewed first-century Christianity as merely a sect of Judaism because the church was still searching for its identity, and many in the first-century churches identified as Jewish (Jews who followed Jesus). Many Christians in fact still worshiped in the Jewish synagogues. The first believers did not even call themselves Christians, but “followers of the Way.” Antioch was where the term “Christian” was first used ([Acts 11:26](#)). As increasing numbers of Gentiles became believers, due largely to Paul's endeavors, the necessity of observing the Mosaic Law came into question. Paul's insistence that our righteousness is based on Christ's righteousness and received as a gift became the foundation of the Christian faith. This marked the separation of Christianity from Judaism. In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he consistently emphasizes the difference between being enslaved by the Law and being free in the Holy Spirit as a means to teach the true Gospel and solidify the church's identity.

At-A-Glance

1. Works of the Flesh (**Galatians 5:18–21**)
2. The Fruit of the Spirit (vv. 22–26)
3. Carry Another’s Burdens (6:1–6)
4. What They Reap, They Will Sow (vv. 6–10)

In Depth

1. Works of the Flesh (Galatians 5:18–21**)**

Today’s lesson begins in the midst of Paul’s attempt to convince the Galatians to not become enslaved by the Law, which—unlike the Holy Spirit—was not intended to save, but rather to shed light on sin (**Romans 3:20**). Paul informs that those led by the Spirit (i.e., those under the continual guidance of and in abiding relationship with the Spirit) are no longer subject to the Law, nor can be condemned by it (**Romans 8:1**). Paul switches focus to describe the works of the flesh (the sinful state of people). He uses this vice list, a convention of Greco-Roman moral rhetoric, to emphasize that those who continually practice these sins will not inherit the kingdom of God.

2. The Fruit of the Spirit (vv. 22–26)

The works of the flesh contrast the fruit of the Spirit. The word “fruit” denotes an organic growth that stems from the believer’s relationship with Christ. The first fruit listed is love. It is also the virtue upon which all the other fruit are based (**1 Corinthians 13:1–3**). In essence, the operation of the Holy Spirit is love manifested in believers’ lives; there is no law against love. Followers of Christ still struggle with sinful human desires, but strive to do good. Paul adds that if believers live by the Spirit, they should walk in the Spirit. In other words, believers should be in one accord in following the Spirit instead of giving in to competition or jealousy.

3. Carry Another’s Burdens (6:1–6)

Chapter 6 begins with Paul imploring the spiritually stronger Galatians to help strengthen those among them who are overtaken by sin. Overtaken does not mean continually sinning (**Galatians 6:1**), but having their guard down. Stronger believers should help meekly, being careful to not also be tempted to sin. Paul then requests they shoulder the burdens of the weak in sin as a way to fulfill the Law of Christ, which is to love one another (**Galatians 5:14**). Those who try to judge the weaker, thinking themselves above helping others, deceive themselves. They should examine their own work, because all must carry their own burdens. The burden in verse 5 refers to the believer’s work, which we will all be held accountable for on Judgment Day. This is different from the burden in verse 2, which refers to daily trials faced by every Christian.

4. What They Reap, They Will Sow (vv. 6–10)

Now that Paul has explained the difference between the flesh and the Spirit and implored them to support one another, he tells the Galatians to not be fooled, because anyone can turn away from God’s justice. Whatever they reap, they will sow. If someone pleases their sinful nature, they will perish, but if they please the Spirit, they will have eternal life. Paul says to not get tired of

doing right, because if they hold on, they will reap blessings at the appointed time. In the meantime, the Galatians should take advantage of every opportunity to do good for all, especially for fellow believers.

Search the Scriptures

1. Why does Paul compare and contrast the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit ([Galatians 5:19–26](#))?
2. Paul gives abstract concepts for the fruit of the Spirit (i.e., love, joy, peace). What are specific concrete actions that exhibit the fruit of the Spirit (vv. 22–23)?

Discuss the Meaning

We often think that holy living is only a personal endeavor. However, God wants us to live in the Spirit as a community.

1. How do the works of the flesh undermine the Christian community?
2. How does the fruit of the Spirit unify us?

Lesson in Our Society

From the moment we're born, laws govern our lives. Babies must have birth certificates. Children must go to school. Walk on green. Stop on red. Most people try to follow the law to the letter. It's easy for us to look at the fruit of the Spirit as more laws to follow. The Lord desires that our lives reflect the fruit, but not in legalistic ways. Our lives should be an outpouring of our love for Christ and our desire to serve one another.

Make It Happen

We have many opportunities to do good in this world. The question is, what should we do? Create a plan to exhibit at least one fruit of the Spirit each day of the week. Come back and report to the class the challenges and rewards.

More Light on the Text

Galatians 5:18–6:10

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Here Paul alerts the Galatians to the possibilities inherent in their new life in Christ. If they let themselves be led by the Spirit, they will not feel obligated to a legal system that can command but is powerless to enforce obedience. By choosing to follow the Spirit's leading, they will be free from the Law and empowered by the Spirit to pursue the things of the Spirit.

The word for “led” in the Greek is *ago* (**AH-go**), used in the passive voice to mean to be brought along or taken along. Therefore, being led by the Spirit means submitting our will to Him, which leads us to do God’s will. However, following the Spirit is not passive; the believer is still responsible for performing their obligations. The sense of the original language is that believers must continue to take responsibility and consciously let the Spirit lead them.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies. 21 Envyings, murder, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

These verses clearly define fleshly and improper behavior for Christians called to exercise freedom in Christ. In fact, Paul adds emphatically what he has said on numerous occasions: “they which do such things (i.e., habitually practice such behaviors) shall not (i.e., shall in no way) inherit the kingdom of God.” The Greek translates this as a solemn warning.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Paul identifies the qualities evident in those believers who walk in the Spirit. He contrasts the singular fruit of the Spirit with the plural works of the flesh. The singular form of the Greek word *karpos* (**kar-POCE**), meaning fruit, indicates that the Spirit is capable of producing this fruit in every believer. They are not fruits, but fruit. The Spirit produces character and righteous behavior, which do not need laws and make obedience to the Law obsolete. The “works” produced by the flesh need the Law to keep them in check, so those who try to live by those works (obedience to the Law) always fall short. Those who walk in the Spirit put to death the flesh and its desires, and they allow the Spirit of God to lead them and produce fruit that does not need legislation.

In other words, those who have identified themselves with Christ and belong to Him “have crucified” or put to death everything in opposition to Him, and are free to produce the fruit of the Spirit through their behavior.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

This concisely summarizes what Paul has already said. It states what is true “since we live in the Spirit.” It reflects the logical consequence of the reality of living in the Spirit: “let us also walk in the Spirit.” Since we live in the Spirit, we must line up with the Spirit. Believers who claim to live in the Spirit must also express behavior resulting from the Spirit’s control.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

This verse seems to suggest that Paul does not want his readers to become overconfident about their position in Christ. A person who is in Christ and led by the Spirit will always reflect His spirit and attitude. Sometimes good behavior can provoke and stir up jealousy in others, particularly when done in ways that attract attention.

It is reasonable to think that Paul saw the Galatians arguing among themselves from this vantage point. Those who correctly understood salvation might have acted in ways that provoked others or stirred up envy. Consequently, they conducted themselves worse than those who were wrong. The implication is that believers have an obligation to manage their conduct so as not to tempt others to do wrong.

The attitude that seeks to prove one's rightness at the expense of another's spiritual well-being borders on "vain glory." This does not speak well of the Holy Spirit's leading.

6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

The word "overtaken" (Gk. *prolambano*, **pro-lam-BAH-no**) can mean to be entrapped, taken, caught by surprise, or to take a false step. This gives the meaning that the man "overtaken in a fault" was not intentionally doing wrong, but suddenly became aware that his actions were wrong. In such cases, Paul counsels, believers should have a spirit of meekness and a view toward restoration. They must not satisfy the lust of the flesh by using the situation to gossip, feel superior, or exact overly harsh punishment on those at fault. The antidote to such fleshly behavior is to "consider thyself, lest thou also be tempted." As we correct our fellow Christians, we should keep in mind the famous saying, "There but for the grace of God go I."

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Those led by the Spirit are called to be willing and available to help carry one another's loads. Paul's sense makes this behavior the style of living in Christian fellowship. The verb "bear" is from the Greek word *bastazo* (**bahs-TAHD-zo**), meaning to take up, carry, or endure, suffer, or undergo. The word for "burdens" is *baros* (Gk. **BAH-roce**), meaning weight or, as in this case, hardship. We should support one another by helping to bear heavy hardship. Bearing each other's burdens should not be occasional, but a way of living and behaving in Christian community. With this behavior, we, like Christ, will have fulfilled the Law.

3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

This verse helps believers understand how vulnerable they are to the influence of the flesh. Every believer is a stone's throw away from thinking too highly of himself or herself. This is particularly true today, when many factors—economic position, racial and ethnic identity, comparing ourselves to others on social media—make it easy to feel better than others. Properly and legitimately estimating our own value is an expression of the Spirit-led life. When verse 2 is connected to verse 3, the message is clear: those who overvalue themselves are unlikely to bear another's burdens.

4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

Paul's concern in this verse is that followers compare themselves only to what the Spirit calls them to become. Those led by the Spirit don't need to compare themselves with other believers; self-evaluation comes from proving their work in the light of God's Word. In fact, rejoicing

because you think you are better than someone else betrays life in Christ. It is not the way of the Spirit. Given this interpretation of verse 4, verse 5 is a logical restatement.

5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

This might appear to contradict verse 2, where Paul says we should help share each other's burdens. Here he says to bear your own burden. The difference is apparent in the Greek. The Greek word for burden here is *phortion* (**for-TEE-on**). It is different from verse 2; the meaning is better conveyed as "load," referring to everyone "pulling their own weight" in responsibilities. In other words, you should do your work and not expect someone else to do it for you. In this way, the work of ministry is shouldered by everyone and not by a few. We each have a responsibility to carry part of the burden of ministry, such as evangelism, teaching, praising, or showing hospitality. This is quite different from helping someone who is burdened down with problems; in this case we come to their aid to help shoulder their pain. Laziness is not a virtue in Scripture; our Christian responsibility is to carry our own weight and help bear others' misfortunes.

6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. 7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Paul continues the line of thought that illustrates the interconnectedness of the body of Christ. Those taught in the Word should communicate (Gk. *koinoneo*, **koi-no-NEH-oh**), or share, and partner with those who teach the Word. In other words, those who receive spiritual blessings should share their material blessings with those who labor over them. This is a relationship of mutual reciprocity, and the type of relationship the Lord wants to be maintained between leaders and followers in the church.

Using the metaphor of a farmer who sows and reaps the harvest, Paul says that what a believer sows determines what he or she harvests—our choices determine our consequences. Whether we choose to live in the Spirit or in the flesh, consequences will follow. Believers are encouraged to sow to the Spirit, and refuse to become discouraged. This explains the need for Paul's note of encouragement in verse 9.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

The admonition is to not become "weary" nor "faint." The Greek word for weary is *ekkakeo* (**ek-kah-KEH-oh**), meaning to lose heart or become tired. The word for faint in the Greek is *ekluo* (**ek-LOO-oh**), meaning to faint or give up. These words are synonymous. Paul encourages the Galatians not to give up, because there will be a reward after all is said and done.

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Paul concludes this section with the primary directives for the Christian faith. He points toward the expectation that whenever an opportunity (Gk. *kairos*, **kye-ROCE**) or divine moment

presents itself, the believer has already made up his or her mind to act. They must do good, and the scope of their good works includes all people, but especially those of the household (Gk. *oikeios*, **oy-KAY-ocē**) of faith. This term was used for everybody who was part of a Roman household—all the people connected to the father or *pater familias*, who was the head of the household. As the people of God, we form the same type of community with Him as our head. In other words, those related to us through faith in Jesus should be the first and foremost recipients of our good deeds.

Say It Correctly

Lasciviousness. lah-**SI**-vee-us-nes.

Variance. **VA**-ree-ens.

Emulations. em-yoo-**LAY**-shuns.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Walk in Newness of Life
([Romans 6:1–11](#))

TUESDAY

The Sower and the Seed
([Luke 8:4–15](#))

WEDNESDAY

Gifts That Lead to Faithfulness
([1 Peter 1:3–9](#))

THURSDAY

Wholeness by Prayer and Action
([James 5:13–20](#))

FRIDAY

Practice Mutual Discipline
([Matthew 18:15–20](#))

SATURDAY

Support Ministers Generously
([1 Corinthians 9:3–12](#))

SUNDAY

Choose to Love Each Other
([Galatians 5:18–6:10](#))