



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Winter 2017-2018 Midweek/ Sermon Starter

Unit 2: Spiritual Check Up

Sermon Series Title: Grow Up: A Look At Spiritual Maturity

Sermon 2: Fresh Produce

Bible Passage: Galatians 5:16-25

Introduction

Grocery stores compete in attempt to influence potential customers to patron their business. Many stores market themselves as the best-priced stores—promising big savings and low prices. Some promote convenience by highlighting their numerous locations across the country. Others confidently boast about their stellar customer service—promising smiling faces and carefree and hassle-free shopping. Indeed, these are great incentives to draw and maintain customers.

However, I believe there is one clear demarcation that separates an average grocery store from an exceptional grocery store: the produce section. The produce/fruit section is usually stationed at the entrance of most grocery stores. The produce section is the first thing that people see when they enter a grocery store. In a real sense, the produce section defines the entire store. If the produce is unpleasant, chances are the entire store is substandard.

The same is true in Christian discipleship: our fruit defines us all.

Background/Context

Paul wrote to the church at Galatia and emphasized the need for fresh fruit—the fruit of the spirit. Paul insistently admonished all of us to inspect our fruit to discover if we are producing fresh fruit—the fruit of the Spirit.

A. Preserve the Spirit
(Gal. 5:16-18)

In Galatians 5, Paul reminded the church at Galatia that the Holy Spirit freed them from the bondage of sin. The Holy Spirit is a gift that was given to us by Jesus Christ. In fact, Paul wrote, “the Spirit of God lives in you” (Rom. 8:9). Therefore, believers had a responsibility to produce the fruit that flowed from the Holy Spirit.

The church at Galatia initially functioned under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, the church eventually wavered and started operating under their own personal desires. In an attempt to reclaim these believers, Paul penned, “walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit

desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want" (Gal. 5:16-17).

Paul was addressing an audience that possessed the Holy Spirit and knew how to produce the fruit of the Spirit. Their issue was that they did not do a good job preserving the fruit. Paul wanted the believers to recognize the battle between their flesh and the Holy Spirit. In essence, Paul was petitioning the believers to preserve the fruit that the Holy Spirit produced in them. Similarly, we also must be committed to preserving the fruit of the spirit that dwells in us.

Application Point: How well have you preserved the Holy Spirit inside of you? What can you do to make sure that the Holy Spirit flourishes in you? Remember, the Holy Spirit resides in each Christian. Make sure you pay attention to His guidance in your daily life.

B. Protect the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-21)

In verses 16-18, Paul warned believers about the battle between the flesh and the spirit. He exposed the affects from the works of the flesh. Paul named "sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar" (Gal. 5:19-21). These poisons contaminate fruit and subsequently suspend the flow of the Spirit. Our flesh seeks to suspend the flow of the Spirit so it can dominate us.

We must not only preserve the Spirit, but we must protect the Spirit as well. How do we do that? Paul commands us to "walk by the Spirit" (v. 16). What an amazing metaphor to use for Christian development: walking. The word *walk* is a progressive present tense command that implies continuity. This command is constant, consistent, and habitual. Hence, the command is "keep on continually walking by the Spirit." Therefore, we protect the Spirit by continually walking by the Spirit.

Don't be fooled. Walking by the Spirit does not come by pragmatics, philosophy or psychology; walking by the Spirit comes by perpetual praxis—a daily discipline. Maintaining the fruit of the Spirit is a routine—a daily task—it happens one day at a time. Everyday, we must make a conscience decision to protect the Spirit from the poisons of our flesh.

Application Point: In what ways have your desires blocked the flow of the Spirit of God in your life? Remember, listening to the Spirit is a daily task. Everyday, we must choose to obey the Holy Spirit instead of giving in to our desires. Commit to walking by the Spirit.

C. Produce the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25)

Paul further offered the characteristics of the Spirit as the antithesis to the poisons of the flesh. He wrote, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23a). Paul offered these characteristics as a guide for

spiritual maturity. These characteristics are produced by the Spirit of God, and therefore, should be present in the lives of all believers.

Paul taught that every believer should produce the fruit of the Spirit. By having the Spirit of God in his or her life a believer has the means to combat the flesh. Understand that sin poisons fruit, but the Spirit produces fruit. Unfortunately, producing this fruit is no easy task. Paul offered encouragement for achieving this task: "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24). Faith in Christ allows us to crucify our flesh in order to produce all the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit.

Paul concluded his manual on fresh produce by informing us that living by the Spirit and following the Spirit are necessary to crucify the flesh. Moreover, we live by the Spirit by following the Word of God. This is why David penned, "I have treasured your word in my heart so that I may not sin against You....Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path" (Psalm 119:11,105).

Application Point: What areas of your life keep you from producing the fruit of the Spirit? Remember, we are expected to live lives that overflow with the characteristics from the fruit of the Spirit. However, we must be willing to control our desires.