

## FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

By Sherry Cumby

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...



**"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23).**

**Each of these is a characteristic of the Holy Spirit's active presence in our daily activities. Let's look at each one and ask some diagnostic questions to make sure we are healthy.**

**1. Love.** This word for love doesn't refer to warm feelings but to a deliberate attitude of good will and devotion to others. Love gives freely without looking at whether the other person deserves it, and it gives without expecting anything back.

*Question:* Am I motivated to do for others as Christ has done for me, or am I giving in order to receive something in return?

**2. Joy.** Unlike happiness, joy is gladness that is completely independent of the good or bad things that happen in the course of the day. In fact, joy denotes a supernatural gladness given by God's Spirit that actually seems to show up best during hard times. This is a product of fixing your focus on God's purposes for the events in your life rather than on the circumstances.

*Question:* Am I experiencing a joy of life on a regular basis, or is my happiness dependent on things going smoothly in my day?

**3. Peace.** It's not the absence of turmoil, but the presence of tranquility even while in a place of chaos. It is a sense of wholeness and

completeness that is content knowing that God controls the events of the day.

*Question:* Do I find myself frazzled by the crashing waves of turmoil in my life, or am I experiencing "the peace that passes all comprehension" (Philippians 4:6-7)?

**4. Patience.** Other words that describe this fruit are lenience, long-suffering, forbearance, perseverance, and steadfastness. It is the ability to endure ill treatment from life or at the hands of others without lashing out or paying back.

*Question:* Am I easily set off when things go wrong or people irritate me, or am I able to keep a godly perspective in the face of life's irritations?

**5. Kindness.** When kindness is at work in a person's life, he or she looks for ways to adapt to meet the needs of others. It is moral goodness that overflows. It's also the absence of malice.

*Question:* Is it my goal to serve others with kindness, or am I too focused on my own needs, desires, or problems to let the goodness of God overflow to others?

**6. Goodness.** While kindness is the soft side of good, goodness reflects the character of God. Goodness in you desires to see goodness in others and is not beyond confronting or even rebuking (as Jesus did with the money changers in the temple) for that to happen.

*Question:* Does my life reflect the holiness of God, and do I desire to see others experience God at a deep level in their own lives?

**7. Faithfulness.** A faithful person is one with real integrity. He or she is someone others can look to as an example, and someone who is truly devoted to others and to Christ. Our natural self always wants to be in charge, but Spirit-controlled faithfulness is evident in the life of a person who seeks good for others and glory for God.

*Question:* Are there areas of hypocrisy and indifference toward others in my life, or is my life characterized by faith in Christ and faithfulness to those around me?

**8. Gentleness.** Meekness is not weakness. Gentleness is not without

power, it just chooses to defer to others. It forgives others, corrects with kindness, and lives in tranquility.

*Question:* Do I come across to others as brash and headstrong, or am I allowing the grace of God to flow through me to others?

**9. Self-control.** Our fleshly desires, Scripture tells us, are continually at odds with God's Spirit and always want to be in charge. Self-control is literally releasing our grip on the fleshly desires, choosing instead to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. It is power focused in the right place.

*Question:* Are my fleshly desires controlling my life, or am I allowing the Spirit to direct me to the things that please God and serve others?

*God Focused...with Christ-like Character*