

SPIRIT VS. THE FLESH

Jesus says that you can tell a tree by the kind of fruit it produces. An orange tree produces oranges, an apple tree produces apples, and a fig tree produces figs. Disciples of Jesus Christ who are filled with the Holy Spirit produce the fruit of Jesus' life. Their character looks, smells, and behaves like His the more they are united with Him. The Bible calls these character traits the "fruit of the Spirit." The Spirit of God uses the word of God and the people of God to produce this fruit in our lives. Scripture tells us that as we live, we are to walk by the spirit, meaning allowing Him to guide us and transform our character.

Read Galatians 5:14-24.

Discuss: In what circumstances and situations are the fruit of the spirit most evident? What about the works of the flesh?

Walk by the Spirit

The command in this passage is to walk by the Spirit. Another way to think of that is to live under the Holy Spirit's control. The direct contrast to walking by the Spirit is to walk according to the flesh. Another way to think of that is to live under the control of our natural sinful desires.

Walking by the Spirit means that the Spirit enables us to have desires for godliness that are stronger than desires for lustful pleasures, material idols, or the boastful pride of life leading us to obey God and not sin.

Read Romans 8:5-9.

Discuss the thinking and actions of someone whose mind is set on the flesh and how this differs from someone whose mind is set on the Spirit.

The Spirit Seals and Enables

Christians are granted spiritual new birth by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us faith in Jesus and at the moment we repent and believe on Him, we are sealed by the Spirit. (John 3:5-8, Titus 3:5, Ephesians 1:13-14)

This is important to know because we do not strive to walk by the Spirit to get His power, but we walk by the Spirit enabled by His power which is already in us. (Ez. 36:26-27)

We do not produce the fruit of the Spirit by performing works of the law or doing religious deeds to change our behavior.

“But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law.” Gal. 5:18

Discuss how it encourages you to know that the Spirit enables us with power to produce His fruit. What is the difference between Spirit-enabled fruit and works-based change?

Yielding to the Spirit

No matter how long we have been Christians or even how much we hate our sin, there will always be a battle between the Spirit and the flesh inside of us. Therefore, we have a moment by moment choice to make on which one will lead us. We must train our hearts on which desire we will yield to.

3 Steps to Yielding to the Spirit

1. Renew your mind with scripture - The Holy Spirit uses His word to stir up our desires for godliness. (Eph. 4:20-24)
2. Pray - Ask God to continue to change your desires and to help you obey the things He is showing you. (Mark 14:38)
3. Yield - In the power of the Spirit, seek to act on the new desires of godliness and obedience. (Gal. 5:25)

Personal Application

Consider something the Holy Spirit has been showing you that you have yet to yield to. Determine what changes you need to make in order to walk by the Spirit more than by the flesh. How can you grow in your worship and thankfulness for the work of the Holy Spirit in your life?