

Taking Stock of the Fruit of the Spirit

Trait	Description	Opposite	Counterfeit	Questions to Ask	Look at Jesus
Love: <i>agape</i>	Opening myself to and serving someone for the intrinsic value of who they are	Fear and self-protection	Selfish affection	Am I using people to feel good about myself? Am I willing to make myself vulnerable in order to serve?	Look at what Jesus did for you on the cross; becoming forsaken so you never would be- just because he loves you, because of your intrinsic value to Him.
Joy: <i>chara</i>	Delight in God for the intrinsic value of who He is	Apathy- "I don't care"; cynicism	Outgoingness; bubblyness	Do I rejoice more in blessings, than in the Blesser? Am I allowing circumstances to determine how I feel about God?	Look at God becoming a Man of Sorrows to "make everything sad untrue," the lengths He goes for us and our future
Peace: <i>eirene</i>	Calm confidence in God's wisdom and control of my life	Distrust and anxiety	Fatalism; resignation	Do I think I run how to run my life better than God does?	Look at Jesus' trusting God as He endured Hell on the cross saying, "Into your hands, I commit my spirit"
Patience: <i>makrothumia</i>	A deeply forgiving spirit; long-suffering; forbearing restraint	An angry spirit	Indifference	Am I quickly irritated? Do I have a short fuse? Do I gain and hold grudges easily?	See Jesus' long-suffering patience on the cross saying "Father, forgive them"
Kindness: <i>chrestotes</i>	Generous in action and attitudes	Envy	People-pleasing; niceness	Do I delight to see other people doing well; lifted up over me?	See Jesus kindness as He pours out every last drop of Himself for you, to raise you up
Goodness: <i>agathusene</i>	Integrity; honesty; Sincerity	Hypocrisy	Goody-too-shoes; frankness	Am I the same on Sunday as I am on Saturday? Am I the same when everybody is watching as when nobody is watching; when I am alone? Am I honest with people?	See how you don't need anyone else's approval if you have Jesus' approval-- and you do.
Faithfulness: <i>pistis</i>	Utterly committed; whole-hearted; courage and loyalty	Always breaking promises; half-heartedness	Legalism; inflexibility	Am I trust-worthy & dependable or am I flakey? Do I keep my promises? Do I give my all or just I do what I can get by with? Am I always making goals but never completing them?	See how Jesus has never let you down.
Gentleness: <i>praotes</i>	Humble; self-forgetful; teachable; considerate	Pride; self-absorption; self-consciousness	Inborn sweetness; spinelessness	Am I always looking in the mirror? Do I walk in a room wondering what do these people think of me? Humility is not thinking less of myself as much as it is thinking of myself less.	See how the God of the Universe humbled himself for you.
Self-Control: <i>Egkrateia</i>	Choosing the important over the urgent; discipline	Moment-driven; self-indulgence	Rigidity; structured	Do I go overboard on either leisure or work; on fitness or projects? Am I involved in everything or have I learned to say "No"? Do principles guide my actions or am I guided by the urgency and the whims of the moment?	See how if we have the Best, the thing that will truly ravish our heart the most, if we have Jesus, why would you need to go nuts on all these other things?

Don't Forget... Aspects of How Fruit Grows*

Gradually—With this fruit metaphor, we learn when we planted in Jesus, change comes gradually. You can't see growth happening. Growth is so small. Often missed. Have you ever sat around and just watched a carrot grow? You have to be patient. You often never feel like you are growing. Athletes, are you stronger or faster than two years ago? How do you know? You may not feel faster. But you know because it was tested. At some point, you'll go through a test and you'll say, wow, if that would have happened to me earlier in my life, it would have devastated me. I'm reacting differently. Fruit.

Seasonally- Psalm 1 says we bear our fruit in season. In Jesus, sometimes you'll be in a winter season, where the growth will be underground. Your roots are going deeper but it seems like the fruit you want to see just isn't coming. And then you'll have a season where the change is all over the place. Bamboo can have years where they seem dormant, like nothing is happening, in then in the 5th year, they shoot up to 80-90 feet in a season.

Conditions matter — If I'm watering my tree with the Kool-Aid of Youtube and Facebook every morning, that's not evil, but my tree will grow better, change will come more surely if being watered with the clean water of God's Word. Spiritual disciplines can make wonderful fertilizer.

Yet fruit is inevitable- if you are in Jesus, you will be changing. You will bear His fruit. That's just what happens. You will become more patient! You will become more joyful! You must. You are in Him. If it's not happening, ever, if you don't even care if it does, then you have to check if you are really planted in Him.

Here's a great story about the inevitability of fruit...

In a cemetery in Italy, there a huge marble slab in the center of the cemetery—ancient, massive and thick. Yet, somehow, a couple centuries ago, a small acorn had fallen into the place where the man was buried. Over the years that little acorn grew and grew until one day it broke through the surface and **cracked that marble slab into two pieces**. Eventually, that tree grew up and rolled the marble slab apart.

You may feel like you have a marble slab on your life—preventing you from ever experiencing spiritual change. Maybe you are in grief, maybe your home situation isn't as great as people think it is, maybe you deal with hurts too deep to mention. And you despair because you'll think it will never change. You will never change.

But it does not matter if there is a 2 ton slab of cement over your heart, the acorn wins. In its gradualness- the acorn ALWAYS wins. The Spirit, looking small and weak as an acorn, if buried in the soil of the Gospel can push through a sprout and release a kind of power that, over time, will crack that massive marble slab in two.

*Indebted to Tim Keller for his unpacking of these categories.
For more information, refer to his 1990 series on "The Fruit of the Spirit"

*No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me.
If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.
This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.
I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.*