

A Time to Renew Our Spirits

Leader: This is a special time for us to spend together in community, friendship and spiritual Orenewal. We will base our discussion today on a review of these passages from Galatians 5:22-23.

[You may wish to have one of your group read the passage.]



²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

The passages from Galatians along with 2 Kings and Luke, look at times of transition, turmoil, and transformation. In a way that's what's happening both in our Country and in our personal lives.

We all want to be productive, vibrant, enjoying a life filled with purpose and meaning. We all know it is extremely difficult to do this during these unusual times. However, the scripture above, Paul urges us to becoming living fruit of the spirit and tells us the secret to a fruitful life. It is a life that is purpose-filled, that brings blessings to others. A life filled with qualities that draw others – love, gentleness, peace, goodness, kindness and self-control.

I think we all are aware that we can't produce the fruitful life on our own. We are the branches of the life-giving vine that is Jesus. Our relationship lor closeness to him – or our lack of it – will directly affect how well we bear fruit for him in our lives.

So, before we begin to explore what this means to us, let's share a prayer.

O, Lord,
We come before you today:
Full of hope,
Full of desire,
Full of promise.
Help us take up the mantle of faith
You have laid before us,
That we may use our own gifts of the Spirit
To face the challenges before us.
Help us face the turmoil
Within and around us,
That we may face the future unafraid.
Show us your way, your truth,
And your life. Amen

Leader: These are only a few questions we'll talk about and please, feel free to share your thoughts.

[The following questions are to encourage your group sharing and discussion.]

- What do you think Paul means here by “the fruit of the Spirit”?

[Leader: Guide discussion to talk about the 9 traits listed in the scripture.]

- Is it your experience that being filled with the Holy Spirit makes these character-traits of Jesus come out of your heart naturally by God's supernatural power?
[Allow time for discussion.]

Leader: As discussion on this question winds down, remind the group that the qualities listed can be expressed through a person's words or actions, they are basic, essential qualities of a person's inner nature, or character. If these qualities describe what we are, then what we do will flow naturally, in God's strength, from the character of God growing in us.]

- If you don't think these traits come out of your heart naturally, would you like them to?
 - Who can you chat with to help you be filled with the Holy Spirit?

[Leader: It would be helpful if you have several suggestions; pastor, another UMW member, perhaps someone that has personally helped you.]

- What would hold you back from talking with someone?

Leader: Again, in a time of turmoil, it is important to remember that . . .

- Love doesn't quit, it keeps giving even when others have given up.
- Given an opportunity, joy fills the heart even in desperate circumstances.
- Peace often surpasses our ability to understand why when we seek it, it can be found.
- Patience endures when you trust in God's wisdom and timing.
- Compassionate kindness for others recognizes we all have human frailties.
- Genuine goodness reveals the holiness of God.
- Faithfulness stands firm and even grows stronger through testing (temptation) and fierce trial.
- Gentle strength makes even the weakest and most insecure feel loved and safe.
- Self-control may take continuous work yet can guide us to do what is right.

We are fortunate to be a community that stands firm in the face of adversity and continues to focus on growing our spirit both as a group and as individuals.

Are there other comments before we close?

[Please allow time for questions and/or comments]

Let's close with a prayer:

Lord, we have learned we have each been fashioned for a unique purpose;
Each of us have been given unique gifts; each blessed with varying abilities.
During times of turmoil and transition, we can choose to become stagnant,
Or we can choose to be transformed by God's love.

When we choose transformation, we choose to fully share in the vision of a
Community led by the Spirit – a community of love, gentleness, self-control,
Joy, patience, peace, faithfulness, kindness, and generosity.

May the transforming love of God work in your lives, today and always.
Go forth into the world with peace, love, and joy. Follow Christ wherever
He leads you. Fulfill the promise found in the fruit of the Spirit. Amen