

Fruit of the Spirit | June 2013



by [David](#) on June 25, 2013 in [By David](#), [Reading PA Updates](#)

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”
(Galatians 5:22 & 23)

Much of my early life (and admittedly a lot of my adult life) as a Christian was spent trying to produce fruit in order to prove to myself, to others and to God that I was a true believer. I struggled to reconcile “for by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8) with “faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 2:17). I knew as a fact that Christ completely paid the penalty for my sin condition and for all of my individual acts of sin, yet still felt as if I needed to prove to Him through my good works that I really believed. If only I could produce fruit then it would be evident that I was a good Christian. I even shared the simple gospel of “faith in Christ to salvation” to many others yet still enslaved myself to a works based justification system before God. Thinking back through my experiences and the things I was taught (or at least the things I remembered from what I was taught, which most likely are not the entirety of the intended messages) I can really see why this was a problem for me. Many of the Bible lessons and sermons always had applications nicely tagged onto the end. I was conditioned to sift through all the scripture, personal stories and details for

the “just do this and don’t do this and you’ll be okay” final thought. Even now, when teaching others, I so badly want to cut to the chase and just tell them what to do and what not to do. That’s the easiest way to get them to live properly, right? Sure, it might seem like the easy way but it’s wrong and can really confuse people. (Don’t get me wrong, there are certainly times to simply teach, admonish, rebuke and correct, but it all must be according to Biblical truths, from the right heart and for the right purposes.) What I’ve come to realize is that in my attempt to produce fruit to prove my faith and justify myself before God, I was circumventing the correct way in which the Bible lays this whole process out. Jesus said: “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:4). What I was doing was like a broken branch sitting on the ground trying to grow fruit on its own. Not going to happen. A branch apart from the vine has no source for water, nutrients or life. It is dead. It will never produce fruit and is only good to be burned in the brush pile. It’s not until the vinedresser comes along and grafts that branch into the vine that anything can happen. Once attached, water, nutrients and life will freely flow in and that branch will perk up and strengthen. Green leaves will start to form and eventually a little bud with a flower will pop out. Sooner or later, as more water, nutrients and life flow from the vine into that branch, fruit will appear. This is the natural way. The only way. Trying to produce fruit on my own was a futile effort. All I must “do” is abide in Christ. When I abide in Christ, the Holy Spirit can freely work in and through me to produce His fruit. They’re called “the fruit of the Spirit” and not “the fruit of myself” for a reason. I can stop working and simply abide in Christ. If fruit is not being produced then it’s time to take a look at where I am in relation to the True Vine. Endeavor only to abide in the True Vine, Christ alone. So, what “fruit” is the Spirit producing through us now that we have been “abiding in the True Vine”?

LEARN

Bible Study with Keith and Naomi Keyser

We “randomly” ran into the Keyzers almost 2 years ago at a local fall apple festival. It was during the beginning of when God was drawing us back to

Himself and we were clearly led by the Spirit to ask them to disciple us. It has truly been a blessing as we have been studying the life of Christ as recorded for us in the book by Matthew. The time spent with them and in the Word has really deepened the love we have for our God. **Pray** that we will continue to learn much and draw ever nearer to Christ as we finish up this study and that the Keysers will continue to faithfully minister God's Word to us and others as they travel around the country.

Auditing Classes at Lancaster Bible College

While in France, a number of missionaries encouraged us to get some formal Bible

training while we had the opportunity. Lancaster Bible College is about 30 minutes away and so far we've audited three classes: An Introduction to Theology, Early Church (Acts) and Old Testament 1 (The Pentateuch). We are about to start Old Testament 2 (Israel's Life and History). **Pray** that we will have the stamina to keep up these studies and that we will retain all of the information given to use for future use in sharing the great love of God with others.

Apologetics Course (TBD)

We are considering a lecture series by Ravi Zacharias on apologetics and looking for someone (we have a few ideas) to guide us through it. This was also another recommendation we were given by a number of missionaries in France. **Pray** that this actually happens and that we learn even more about how to defend our reasonable faith in an ever increasingly skeptical world.

SERVE

Hosting and Co-Leading a Missional Community with Reading City Church

We have about 12 people in our group and we are going through the book: "Celebration of Discipline" by Richard J Foster. We meet every other week in our little apartment to discuss what we've read and then over the next week put into practice the spiritual disciplines as laid out in the book: Meditation, Prayer, Fasting, Study, Simplicity, Solitude, Submission, Service, Confession, Worship, Guidance and Celebration. For the "missional" aspect of the group we have been involved with Hope Rescue Mission in Reading. We have organized an ongoing donation drive at RCC (even picking up free things along the road after yard sales) for the Hope Thrift Store, helped with the gardens, cleaning and maintenance projects and soon will begin serving dinners and leading the evening gospel message and worship time at least once a month. **Pray** that we

wouldn't turn these disciplines into law, but rather out of our love for God be open to the work He desires to accomplish through us by them.

Camp Involvement

This past fall, we directed the College and Career Retreat at Camp Iroquoia where Rick Patton shared on the topic: "Defending Your Faith in the Face of the Philosophies of this World". (This was the retreat during which the Chapel Barn burned to the ground.) David will be counseling for two weeks at Boys' Camp this summer and Rachel will be there to help in the kitchen for a few days during that time. We are planning to get there for the last few days of Teen Camp to hear Nate Bramsen. **Pray** for all the young people that will come to all the camps, that they would hear the gospel, come to know Christ and grow in their relationship with Him. **Pray** also for the directors, speakers, counselors and staff as they give up their time to serve in this necessary ministry.

LOVE

Discipling Others

God provided a great opportunity for us and we are now discipling another young couple, one of which is a brand new Christian! (There is an awesome story about this that I will share at another time.) We are using the book: "Follow: Learning to Follow Jesus" by Daniel McNaughton and Bryan Koch. It is a great basic introduction into what it really means to be a follower of Christ. Our friendship with this other couple has really deepened and we are all growing closer to Christ through this study. **Pray** for continued excitement and hunger for the Word of God by all of us but especially for this newly saved individual. **Pray** also that we would clearly and effectively share the Truth with both of them.

Evangelism

God has been putting people in our paths in very interesting ways lately. Recently, we were able to share the gospel with Chris (a bike shop owner from whom we bought a 1972 Schwinn Twinn Deluxe tandem bike), Randy (a neighbor who knocked on OUR door to ask about our hanging flower baskets), Scott (a gas station attendant in New Hampshire) and Deb (a "goddess" who we talked with about her "peace" & "coexist" bumper stickers). **Pray** that God would continue to burden our hearts for the lost and that He would give us confidence to share His GREAT news with everyone we come in contact with.

Finally, **pray** that God would continue to lead us and open doors regarding future missions work here and abroad. **Pray** that we would listen with open hearts and immediately obey when He commands.

