



HOW SWEET IT IS: GROWING THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Fall 2022 Small Group Study

Pastor James' Welcome:

Welcome to our study, *How Sweet It Is*. This study will be a fusion of fruits of the Spirit and learning spiritual disciplines. This process is called spiritual formation. Our guide will be the fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23, which lists nine fruits. We will also use ideas from the book *Invitation to a Journey* by Dr. Robert Mulholland and Ruth Haley Barton. The definition of spiritual formation in the book is “a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.” I highly recommend this book if you want to dig deeper into this process.

In this study, we will take 7 weeks to focus on the fruit the Holy Spirit can produce in our lives when we open ourselves to allow God to grow us. I hope that you will find at least one spiritual discipline that you can include in your regular routine to live more like Jesus each day. The Holy Spirit is ready to work in and through you. When you allow that fruit to grow, you will live the sweet life that grows God's love in the world.

I hope this process will be a blessing for you and those around you.

In CHRIST,

Pastor James

Week 1: Intro and Self Control

1. What spoke to you in the message?

Day 1: Galatians 5:13-25

1. What grows in your garden with your help? Without your help?
2. How does Paul sum up the entire law?
3. What differences do you see in what the Spirit produces and what the sinful nature produces?
4. If what the Spirit produces is fruit, what might we call what the sinful nature produces?

5. Where might you need some new self-control or discipline?

Day 2: I Corinthians 9:24-27

1. What prizes have you won in which you take pride?

2. How would you compare your life to a race?

3. What disciplines do you have/need to help you live the Christian life with purpose, so that you are not running aimlessly?

4. What keeps Christians from running to win the prize? Share ways we could remove barriers and help each other.

Day 3: Luke 24:13-35

1. If you were walking (or eating) with Jesus, what questions would you ask him?
2. Why do you think Jesus is slow to reveal himself?
3. When has God opened your eyes to give you a better understanding of who he is?
4. When have you recently been surprised by God in a moment or season of disappointment?

Day 4: Psalm 139

Before reading the Psalm, take one minute of silence to clear your heart and mind and be open to what the scripture says.

Psalm 139

¹⁻⁶ GOD, investigate my life;
get all the facts firsthand.
I'm an open book to you;
even from a distance, you know what I'm
thinking.
You know when I leave and when I get
back;
I'm never out of your sight.
You know everything I'm going to say
before I start the first sentence.
I look behind me and you're there,
then up ahead and you're there, too—
your reassuring presence, coming and
going.
This is too much, too wonderful—
I can't take it all in!

⁷⁻¹² Is there anyplace I can go to
avoid your Spirit?
to be out of your sight?
If I climb to the sky, you're there!
If I go underground, you're there!
If I flew on morning's wings
to the far western horizon,
You'd find me in a minute—
you're already there waiting!
Then I said to myself, "Oh, he even sees me
in the dark!
At night I'm immersed in the light!"
It's a fact: darkness isn't dark to you;
night and day, darkness and light,
they're all the same to you.

¹³⁻¹⁶ Oh yes, you shaped me first
inside, then out;
you formed me in my mother's womb.
I thank you, High God—you're
breathtaking!
Body and soul, I am marvelously made!
I worship in adoration—what a creation!
You know me inside and out,
you know every bone in my body;
You know exactly how I was made, bit by
bit,
how I was sculpted from nothing into
something.
Like an open book, you watched me grow
from conception to birth;
all the stages of my life were spread out
before you,
The days of my life all prepared
before I'd even lived one day.

¹⁷⁻²² Your thoughts—how rare, how
beautiful!
God, I'll never comprehend them!
I couldn't even begin to count them—
any more than I could count the sand of
the sea.
Oh, let me rise in the morning and live
always with you!
And please, God, do away with
wickedness for good!
And you murderers—out of here!—
all the men and women who belittle you,
God,

infatuated with cheap god-imitations.
See how I hate those who hate you, GOD,
see how I loathe all this godless
arrogance;
I hate it with pure, unadulterated hatred.
Your enemies are my enemies!

²³⁻²⁴ Investigate my life, O God,
find out everything about me;
Cross-examine and test me,
get a clear picture of what I'm about;
See for yourself whether I've done
anything wrong—
then guide me on the road to eternal life.

1. What does the passage make you think about?
2. How does the passage make you feel?
3. What is one thing that stands out to you from this passage?

Prayer Exercise next page.

Prayer Exercise: As we begin this series on the Holy Spirit take some time to reflect on how you have experienced God in the past. How would you describe your spiritual journey? Think about important spiritual moments and list how God tends to bring transformation in your life. (Examples: through reading the Bible or devotions, through music, through a spoken message, through silence, alone or with other people.)

Week 2: Gentleness

1. What spoke to you in the message?

Day 1: Matthew 11:25-30

1. When has a child had to explain something to you?

2. Why is the gospel hidden from the wise and the learned but revealed to little children?

3. What is the purpose of yoking animals?
4. A yoke was put on animals to work; how does that connect with Jesus saying his yoke will give rest?
5. How have you seen people sharing each other's burdens at Christ Church? Who is God calling you to come alongside?

Day 2: 2 Timothy 2:22-26

1. What kind of teacher have you learned the most from?

2. How does gentleness come into play in verses 24 and 25? How would you define gentleness as it is used here?
3. According to this scripture, what should we hope would be accomplished by showing kindness and gentleness?
4. What helps you avoid arguments?

Day 3: John 8:2-11

1. Can you remember a time you should have gotten in trouble for something you did? What happened?

2. Describe the different players in this scripture. Which one do you identify with most?

3. How is this situation a trap for Jesus?

4. Why do we withhold mercy? Who is the Holy Spirit guiding you to show gentleness and mercy to this week?

Day 4: Psalm 86

Before reading the Psalm, take one minute of silence to clear your heart and mind and be open to what the scripture says.

Psalm 86

¹⁻⁷ Bend an ear, GOD; answer me.
I'm one miserable wretch!
Keep me safe—haven't I lived a good life?
Help your servant—I'm depending on

you!
You're my God; have mercy on me.
I count on you from morning to night.
Give your servant a happy life;

I put myself in your hands!
You're well-known as good and forgiving,
bighearted to all who ask for help.
Pay attention, God, to my prayer;
bend down and listen to my cry for help.
Every time I'm in trouble I call on you,
confident that you'll answer.

⁸⁻¹⁰ There's no one quite like you
among the gods, O Lord,
and nothing to compare with your
works.
All the nations you made are on their way,
ready to give honor to you, O Lord,
Ready to put your beauty on display,
parading your greatness,
And the great things you do—
God, you're the one, there's no one but
you!

¹¹⁻¹⁷ Train me, God, to walk straight;
then I'll follow your true path.
Put me together, one heart and mind;
then, undivided, I'll worship in joyful

fear.
From the bottom of my heart I thank you,
dear Lord;
I've never kept secret what you're up to.
You've always been great toward me—
what love!
You snatched me from the brink of
disaster!
God, these bullies have reared their heads!
A gang of thugs is after me—
and they don't care a thing about you.
But you, O God, are both tender and kind,
not easily angered, immense in love,
and you never, never quit.
So look me in the eye and show kindness,
give your servant the strength to go on,
save your dear, dear child!
Make a show of how much you love me
so the bullies who hate me will stand
there slack-jawed,
As you, God, gently and powerfully
put me back on my feet.

1. What does the passage make you think about?

2. How does the passage make you feel?

3. What is one thing that stands out to you from this passage?

Prayer Exercise: Find your rough spots. This can help you know where you need more gentleness. Reflect on the past 24-48 hours. What moments were you rough on yourself? When did you question yourself or get upset with yourself? How might you need to be gentler on yourself?

Also, reflect on moments you were rough on others. Did you yell at anyone? What was done by others that upset you? How might you be gentler with others?

Week 3: Faithfulness

1. What spoke to you in the message?

Day 1: Matthew 25:14-30

1. What is the most valuable thing you have entrusted to another's care?
2. How did the first two servants show their faithfulness to their master and how were they commended for it?
3. How do you feel about how the one talent servant was treated?

4. What does the man's return represent? How can believers live a life of faith as they wait for that event?

5. What is an example of a talent that God has given you and how will you invest that talent?

Day 2: Hebrews 11:1-6

1. What are things we put our faith in even though we do not understand how they work?

2. How does verse 1 describe faith? How would you define it?

3. Why do you think the first thing mentioned that we believe in by faith is God creating the universe?

4. How does your faith in God impact your daily life?

Day 3: Genesis 22:1-18

1. What in your life would you find hard to give up for God?
2. What did God ask Abraham to do and what was Abraham's response?
3. What can we surmise about Isaac's faith from this scripture? How is Jesus like Isaac?
4. What test in your life has grown your faith? How did God provide just what you needed at the right time?

Day 4: Psalm 91

Before reading the Psalm, take one minute of silence to clear your heart and mind and be open to what the scripture says.

Psalm 91

¹⁻¹³ You who sit down in the High
God's presence,
spend the night in Shaddai's shadow,
Say this: "God, you're my refuge.
I trust in you and I'm safe!"
That's right—he rescues you from hidden
traps,
shields you from deadly hazards.
His huge outstretched arms protect you—
under them you're perfectly safe;
his arms fend off all harm.
Fear nothing—not wild wolves in the night,
not flying arrows in the day,
Not disease that prowls through the
darkness,
not disaster that erupts at high noon.
Even though others succumb all around,
drop like flies right and left,
no harm will even graze you.
You'll stand untouched, watch it all from a
distance,
watch the wicked turn into corpses.
Yes, because God's your refuge,

the High God your very own home,
Evil can't get close to you,
harm can't get through the door.
He ordered his angels
to guard you wherever you go.
If you stumble, they'll catch you;
their job is to keep you from falling.
You'll walk unharmed among lions and
snakes,
and kick young lions and serpents from
the path.

¹⁴⁻¹⁶ "If you'll hold on to me for dear
life," says God,
"I'll get you out of any trouble.
I'll give you the best of care
if you'll only get to know and trust me.
Call me and I'll answer, be at your side in
bad times;
I'll rescue you, then throw you a party.
I'll give you a long life,
give you a long drink of salvation!"

1. What does the passage make you think about?

2. How does the passage make you feel?

3. What is one thing that stands out to you from this passage?

Prayer Exercise: To offer all we can to God we need to be sure we know ourselves. Use the graph on the next two pages to try to identify the four letters that represent your personality. This is using the Myers-Briggs Personality Assessment. Which side do you answer yes to more in each pair?

How you're energized

Introverts

- Do you process internally and generally prefer to work alone or in smaller groups?
- Do you prefer working through one task at a time, and love tackling fewer tasks with more depth?
- When collaborating, do you listen more than you speak, and would you rather communicate via text where you express yourself better?

Extroverts

- Do you verbally express yourself and often find you need to work through ideas out loud?
- Are you a great multitasker who is happiest when you can bounce back and forth between many different duties?
- Do you tend to speak before you think through a topic, and might change your mind multiple times?
- Do you prefer face-to-face discussion?

How you process information

Sensors

- Do you love concrete facts and detailed information?
- Are you a realist who prefers to gather information in a very sequential, step-by-step fashion?
- Do you tend to commit to a system that seems to work for you?
- Are you achievement-oriented and know how to implement goals in order to succeed?

iNtuitives

- Do you tend to focus on the big picture instead of getting lost in the details?
- Do you tend to think in possibilities?
- Are you more of an idealist who prefers to gather information in a more haphazard, random process?
- Do you get bored with systems and prefer to discover innovative ways to meet goals?

How you make decisions

Thinkers

- When making a decision do you try to analyze the situation objectively?
- Do you follow a logical, rational process?
- Are you a long-term thinker who can quickly recognize a system's flaws and weigh the benefits against the costs?
- Do you value competence and make decisions by identifying principles?

Feelers

- Do you make decisions by looking at things personally and subjectively-empathizing rather than analyzing?
- Do you focus more on short-term by first recognizing the positives in a situation and make decisions based on the potential impact on others?
- Do you value experience and make decisions by identifying values?

How you approach life

Judgers

- Do you think structure and rules are there to make everything easy and simple?
- Do you make precise plans and follow them to a T?
- Do you prefer to be in control of your environment and schedule?

Perceivers

- Do you like to keep your options open?
- Are you flexible, spontaneous, and willing to take things as they come?
- Do you procrastinate, not because you are lazy, but because you are afraid you do not have all of the available input for your decision?
- Do you work in quick bursts of energy and approach your job as a mixture of work and play?

...Continue to next page

From the chart on the previous two pages, circle the four letters that you had the most yes responses to between the pair of letters. (So you should have one letter circled on each row, totaling four altogether.)

I	OR	E
S	OR	N
T	OR	F
J	OR	P

Week 4: Goodness & Kindness

1. Share about Revive Sunday if participated.

Day 1: Luke 10:25-37

1. Share a time when someone went the extra mile to help you. How did that make you feel?
2. Why do you think the expert in the law asked who his neighbor was? Who would you consider to be your neighbor?
3. What excuses might the priest and Levite have for not stopping to help?
4. What excuses do we make today for not taking time to help our neighbor?

5. What does Jesus' command to go and do likewise mean to you? How will you do that this week?

Day 2: Galatians 6:7-10

1. Give some examples, positive and negative, of people reaping what they sow.
2. How does the thought that your actions can please the Holy Spirit make you feel?
3. When have you become weary in doing good and what did you do about it?
4. Why do you think Paul says to especially do good to the family of believers?

Day 3: Ephesians 4:29-32

1. When you were little did you ever get your mouth washed out with soap?
2. How would you define unwholesome or corrupting talk? Who do we grieve with our unkind words and how does that make you feel?
3. What should our words be doing for others?
4. How has the Holy Spirit used you to build someone up with your words recently, or how has someone encouraged you?

Day 4: Psalm 26

Before reading the Psalm, take one minute of silence to clear your heart and mind and be open to what the scripture says.

Psalm 26

Clear my name, God;
I've kept an honest shop.
I've thrown in my lot with you, God, and
I'm not budging.

² Examine me, God, from head to
foot,
order your battery of tests.
Make sure I'm fit
inside and out

³ So I never lose
sight of your love,
But keep in step with you,
never missing a beat.

⁴⁻⁵ I don't hang out with tricksters,
I don't pal around with thugs;
I hate that pack of gangsters,
I don't deal with double-dealers.

⁶⁻⁷ I scrub my hands with purest
soap,

then join hands with the others in the
great circle,
dancing around your altar, God,
Singing God-songs at the top of my lungs,
telling God-stories.

⁸⁻¹⁰ God, I love living with you;
your house glows with your glory.
When it's time for spring cleaning,
don't sweep me out with the quacks and
crooks,
Men with bags of dirty tricks,
women with purses stuffed with bribe-
money.

¹¹⁻¹² You know I've been aboveboard
with you;
now be aboveboard with me.
I'm on the level with you, God;
I bless you every chance I get.

1. What does the passage make you think about?

2. How does the passage make you feel?

3. What is one thing that stands out to you from this passage?

Prayer Exercise: Using the four letters from last week, consider areas where your personality may more naturally engage spiritual disciplines.

	Natural Spiritual Path	Prayer Style
E	Action	Corporate
I	Reflection	Private
S	Service	Engaging Senses
N	Awareness	Intuitive
T	Knowledge	Cognitive
F	Devotion	Affective
J	Discipline	Planned
P	Spontaneity	Unplanned

This list is meant to help and not just tell you what is meaningful to you. How does it help you think about what effectively helps you grow your connection with God?

What activities might it lead you towards?

Week 5: Peace & Patience

1. What spoke to you in the message?

Day 1: Colossians 3:12-17

1. What piece of clothing do you love to wear?
2. With what does Paul tell believers to clothe themselves? What is the last thing we put on from verse 14? Why?
3. How many times does Paul mention being thankful/gratitude? How can an attitude of gratitude help keep peace in the church?

4. What does verse 16 mean to you and how could we do this at Christ Church?

Day 2: John 14:25-31

1. What gives you the most anxiety?
2. Who did Jesus say he was sending to the disciples and what would he do?
3. How is the peace Jesus gives different from what the world offers?
4. Who do you know that needs to hear about the peace that only Jesus gives?
How can you share it with them?

Day 3: James 5:7-11

1. When do you find it especially difficult to be patient?
2. What is James telling the people to be patient about? Are you ever impatient for that?
3. What three examples of patience did James give? How are these different types of circumstances?
4. What are the people warned not to do? How does complaining ruin our Christian witness?
5. Of what attributes of God does James remind us? How might this help you be patient?

Day 4: Psalm 62

Before reading the Psalm, take one minute of silence to clear your heart and mind and be open to what the scripture says.

Psalm 62

¹⁻² God, the one and only—
I'll wait as long as he says.
Everything I need comes from him,
so why not?
He's solid rock under my feet,
breathing room for my soul,
An impregnable castle:
I'm set for life.

³⁻⁴ How long will you gang up on
me?
How long will you run with the bullies?
There's nothing to you, any of you—
rotten floorboards, worm-eaten rafters,
Anthills plotting to bring down mountains,
far gone in make-believe.
You talk a good line,
but every "blessing" breathes a curse.

⁵⁻⁶ God, the one and only—
I'll wait as long as he says.
Everything I hope for comes from him,
so why not?
He's solid rock under my feet,
breathing room for my soul,

An impregnable castle:
I'm set for life.

⁷⁻⁸ My help and glory are in God
—granite-strength and safe-harbor-
God—
So trust him absolutely, people;
lay your lives on the line for him.
God is a safe place to be.

⁹ Man as such is smoke,
woman as such, a mirage.
Put them together, they're nothing;
two times nothing is nothing.

¹⁰ And a windfall, if it comes—
don't make too much of it.

¹¹ God said this once and for all;
how many times
Have I heard it repeated?
"Strength comes
Straight from God."

¹² Love to you, Lord God!
You pay a fair wage for a good day's
work!

1. What does the passage make you think about?

2. How does the passage make you feel?

3. What is one thing that stands out to you from this passage?

Prayer Exercise on next page.

Prayer Exercise: To grow the fruits of the Spirit we are called to be whole and not just engage part of what God is doing. Sometimes we can lean too much into our personality and miss the blessings God might have in other areas. Consider what might be a vulnerability for your personality and how you can strive for wholeness.

	Vulnerability	Need for Wholeness
E	Distraction	Reflection
I	Inaction	Participation
S	Superstition	Awareness
N	Sensuality	Service
T	Emotional Explosion	Devotion
F	Idealizing Authority	Knowledge
J	Self-Righteousness	Spontaneity
P	Rebelliousness	Discipline

To find more peace in life, what might you need to add for more wholeness in your connection to the Holy Spirit?

Week 6: Joy

1. What spoke to you in the message?

Day 1: Luke 6:17-26

1. What everyday things fill you with joy?
2. Who is with Jesus in the crowd as he shares and why is it important?
3. How do these four blessings and four woes cause you to reassess your values of what brings you joy and satisfaction?
4. How has having Christ in your life brought you joy even in the hardest of circumstances?

Day 2: Philippians 2:1-8

1. What did Paul say would make his joy complete?
2. How can we make our attitude the same as Jesus'? What quality did Paul stress?
3. How do you balance the needs of others and your needs?
4. How might God be calling you to find joy in serving others this week?

Day 3: 1 Peter 1:3-9

1. What is something meaningful you have inherited from a parent or grandparent?

Day 4: Psalm 84

Before reading the Psalm, take one minute of silence to clear your heart and mind and be open to what the scripture says.

Psalm 84

¹⁻² What a beautiful home, GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies!

I've always longed to live in a place like this,
Always dreamed of a room in your house,
where I could sing for joy to God-alive!

³⁻⁴ Birds find nooks and crannies in your house,
sparrows and swallows make nests there.
They lay their eggs and raise their young,
singing their songs in the place where we worship.

GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies! King! God!
How blessed they are to live and sing there!

⁵⁻⁷ And how blessed all those in whom you live,
whose lives become roads you travel;
They wind through lonesome valleys,
come upon brooks,
discover cool springs and pools
brimming with rain!

God-traveled, these roads curve up the mountain, and
at the last turn—Zion! God in full view!

⁸⁻⁹ GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies, listen:
O God of Jacob, open your ears—I'm praying!
Look at our shields, glistening in the sun,
our faces, shining with your gracious anointing.

¹⁰⁻¹² One day spent in your house,
this beautiful place of worship,
beats thousands spent on Greek island beaches.
I'd rather scrub floors in the house of my God
than be honored as a guest in the palace of sin.
All sunshine and sovereign is GOD,
generous in gifts and glory.
He doesn't scrimp with his traveling companions.
It's smooth sailing all the way with GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies.

1. What does the passage make you think about?

2. How does the passage make you feel?

3. What is one thing that stands out to you from this passage?

Prayer Exercise: This study has been focused on the fruits of the Spirit and helping us grow in spiritual formation. Dr. Robert Mulholland defines spiritual formation as a process of being formed in the image of Christ for the sake of others. We have been trying to allow the Spirit to form and shape us through this study with focus on spiritual disciplines like silence, scripture reading, reflection, worship, solitude and holy conversations. What experiences over the last 6 weeks have brought you the most joy? Reflect on what experiences were most meaningful and reflect on how you openly engaged those experiences.

Week 7: Love

1. What spoke to you in the message?

Day 1: John 15:1-17

1. What plant describes you? (Examples: bananas, crab apple, oak, weeping willow, palm tree, rose)

2. Who is the vine and who is the gardener? What does the gardener do to make the vine more productive?

3. What must the Christian do to bear fruit? How do we do that?

3. What is the second greatest commandment? How do you show love to your neighbor?

4. Is there an area you need to grow in living these commands?

Day 3: 1 John 4:7-21

1. How did God show His love to us?

2. What is the connection for us of the love God has for us and the love we have for others?

3. How does perfect love drive out fear?

4. When is it hard for you to believe that God loves you?
5. Share a time when the Holy Spirit helped you love a person you thought was impossible to love?

Day 4: Psalm 103

Before reading the Psalm, take one minute of silence to clear your heart and mind and be open to what the scripture says.

Psalm 103

¹⁻² O my soul, bless God.

From head to toe, I'll bless his holy name!

O my soul, bless God,
don't forget a single blessing!

³⁻⁵ He forgives your sins—every one.

He heals your diseases—every one.

He redeems you from hell—saves your life!

He crowns you with love and mercy—a paradise crown.

He wraps you in goodness—beauty eternal.

He renews your youth—you're always young in his presence.

⁶⁻¹⁸ God makes everything come out right;

he puts victims back on their feet.

He showed Moses how he went about his work,

opened up his plans to all Israel.

God is sheer mercy and grace;

not easily angered, he's rich in love.

He doesn't endlessly nag and scold,
nor hold grudges forever.

He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve,
nor pay us back in full for our wrongs.

As high as heaven is over the earth,
so strong is his love to those who fear

him.

And as far as sunrise is from sunset,
he has separated us from our sins.

As parents feel for their children,
God feels for those who fear him.

He knows us inside and out,
keeps in mind that we're made of mud.

Men and women don't live very long;
like wildflowers they spring up and blossom,

But a storm snuffs them out just as quickly,
leaving nothing to show they were here.

God's love, though, is ever and always,
eternally present to all who fear him,
Making everything right for them and their children

as they follow his Covenant ways
and remember to do whatever he said.

¹⁹⁻²² God has set his throne in heaven;

he rules over us all. He's the King!

So bless God, you angels,
ready and able to fly at his bidding,
quick to hear and do what he says.

Bless God, all you armies of angels,
alert to respond to whatever he wills.

Bless God, all creatures, wherever you are—

everything and everyone made by God.

And you, O my soul, bless God!

1. What does the passage make you think about?

2. How does the passage make you feel?

3. What is one thing that stands out to you from this passage?

Prayer Exercise: Our ultimate goal of this series was to grow the fruits of the Spirit and engage spiritual disciplines that might help us to continue our process of transformation. As we finish this study, consider which of the fruits of the Spirit are growing well in your life. What fruits do you need to put a little more attention on? Then consider what you have learned about spiritual disciplines. What one discipline do you want to add to your regular routine in order to grow the fruit of the Spirit? Share with your group so you can encourage each other along the way.