

**ETHAN TEMPLE MINISTRIES**  
**TOOLS FOR LIFE**  
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**THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT AND FELLOWSHIP**

Two essential elements of effective Christian fellowship groups are the fruits and gifts of the Spirit manifested in the lives of the participants. There is only one way these can be present: the participants must be Spirit filled.

In today's devotional we will consider the role the fruits of the Spirit play in fellowship. If the fruits of the Spirit are not present and maturing in the participants' lives, they will not receive the full benefit of the fellowship group. Neither will they have the character necessary to minister to their fellow participants. The fruits of the Spirit are listed in Paul's letter to the Galatians:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22, 23).

The first fruit is love. The Greek word here is *agape* love, the highest form of love. It is the kind of love with which God loves us, doing what is best for the one loved. Jesus described this kind of love in Matthew 5:44:

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

Paul described *agape* love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

This fruit of love will allow the participant of a fellowship group to manifest understanding and sensitivity to others in the group. His/her

example will tend to quiet any harsh tones or attitudes in others. Also, he/she will not have a judgmental attitude when a participant shares with the group his personal struggles. Rather, the fruit of love will cause him/her to feel empathy and compassion. He/she will reach out with healing, encouraging, redemptive words to the one hurting.

Every fruit that follows in Paul's list plays a similarly significant role in maintaining the kind of atmosphere that is necessary for the Christian fellowship group to function as God intends.

These qualities, which comprise the fruits of the Spirit, are impossible to achieve apart from the infilling of the Spirit. Spirit-filled Christians are necessary if the fellowship group is to fulfill its purpose of providing an atmosphere in which all participants can grow into the fullness of Christ:

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:11-16).

The fruits of the Spirit, which are only manifest in the life of the believer by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, must be present in the lives of the core members of the fellowship group. These fruits bring the character of Christ into the group. It is through people that God loves us. So it will be through the Spirit-filled Christians that God will reveal His love to all who come to the fellowship, whether they are Christian or nonchristian.

## **Personal Reflection and Discussion**

What must each fellowship participant have in order for the fruits of the Spirit to be present?

List the fruits of the Spirit and describe how each one is a blessing to those in the fellowship group.

How do you plan to become a part of this kind of fellowship group?

From *40 Days: Prayers and Devotions to Prepare for the Second Coming* by Dennis Smith, 2009. Reprinted with permission.