

Gathering Guide

for Communities and Friends

Hope's Journey: Ripeness of Character, December 15, 2019

The Big Idea

It is the Lord's purpose to develop character within us, and many times that happens as a result of our persevering through suffering. God uses our trials to strengthen our character. One thing for sure, character builds over time. It is developed through our experiences and what we choose to learn and do from them. Each choice and action we take adds or detracts from our character. Abraham Lincoln once said, "Character is like a tree and reputation its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it, the tree is the real thing." A person's

Where we are in the Bible

This week will be considering the passage known as the Fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23 as well as the surrounding verses. Many of you may be very familiar with the list of attributes that make up the Fruit of the Spirit. It's interesting, however, that Paul seems to have pulled this word "fruit" from nowhere, and then drops it just as quickly. We are left to ponder on what Paul expects us to learn from this one-time use of this word "fruit"? Why did he pick that word to describe the natural character of an individual who is filled with the Holy Spirit?

Other scriptures to consider

Genesis 39

Joseph's character revealed

Proverbs 17:3

God's testing

James 1:2-4

Trials and Perseverance

2 Peter 1:5-7

Finding a bit of ourselves

- What are the first things that come to your mind when you hear someone say that another individual has bad character? Conversely, when you are told that someone has good character, what thoughts do you have?
- Who are some people that you know personally, or maybe are famous for one reason or another, that you would say show noble character? What attributes do they exhibit that make you say that? Can you remember anyone that people thought had noble character that proved otherwise? What happened?
- In a moment of honest reflection, how would you rate your own character? Where is your most critical need for improvement? Is your most troublesome "character flaw" known to others or have you managed to create a reputation that masks the issue?

Where do we go from here?

- Consider Paul's use of the phrase "Fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5. In the sermon there was this quote from John Mertz "Character erodes or grows." So how is character like fruit? What does that mean for Christians living out their faith? Does this make the issue of our character seem less or more important?
- In the sermon there was a sharp distinction drawn between the "acts [or works] of the flesh" and the "fruit of the spirit". The "acts" come from within us but we cannot produce "fruit" in and of ourselves. So how does someone acquire this fruit? (Reading the entire passage from Galatians 5:16-26 should help.)
- Review 2 Peter 1:8. Peter challenges his readers to maintain these traits in "increasing measure". When you look at the attributes listed in 2 Peter 1:5-7, Paul's Fruit of the Spirit, and your own troublesome flaws identified above, what steps should you be taking to strengthen your character?



friends church
Willoughby Hills

Prayer focus

As you pray this week, reflect and mediate on these lists of Godly attributes and your own character. Consider the following steps:

- Pray for God to reveal areas in your character that need strengthening.
- Ask for wisdom on steps to take to address these traits.
- Pray for strength and endurance to follow-thru with your commitment.

