

"It's Possible!"

By Allan Pole



Theme: Becoming a godly person begins with recognizing your source.

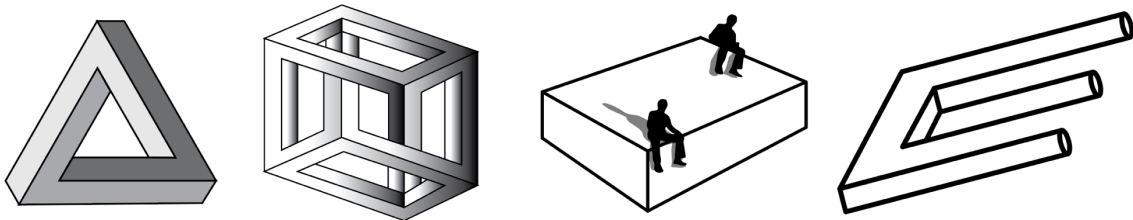
Text: Galatians 5:22-25

Here's a thought: Someone has observed, "A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory."

Traits that are to identify the follower of Jesus Christ are found in Galatians 5:22-25:

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. NIV

At first glance we could conclude that such qualities are impossible, much like these figures...



We might look at these figures and conclude, "They look pretty cool on paper but they are impossible in real life." In a similar manner we might look at the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5 and decide it is impossible. But is it?

It's possible to be like Jesus when there is:

Fruit (Galatians 5:22-23)



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

Unfortunately, the word “Christian” has become so misunderstood and misused that I hesitate to use it anymore. A lot of adjectives and pictures come to mind when we hear the word, but we generally have the idea that a Christian is a clean-living, well-mannered, nice religious person. When you read through the nine fruit of the Spirit listed here you can even think of people that are not very religious that have these qualities. I know people that have been brought up well, that have pleasing personalities and are polite individuals but they do not know Jesus.

What makes these results – these fruit of the Spirit – so radically different from the traits that clean-living, law-abiding people can demonstrate? This fruit is evident even in the most unguarded, private moments when there is pressure and when others hate us. This is the kind of fruit that Jesus showed even while He was hanging on the cross. Looking over the Roman soldiers, jealous religious leaders and angry mob He still uttered in the dying moments of His life, “Father, forgive them for they don’t know what they are doing.” This is amazing fruit!

Reflect on the nine fruit of the Spirit. Are you ready to give up trying to produce them? How much do you want them to be qualities in *your* life?

It’s possible to be like Jesus when there is:

Fruit

Death (Galatians 5:24)



Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

This sign was seen outside a church building: "Don't wait for the hearse to take you to church."

This sign was on the front yard of a funeral home: "Drive carefully. We'll wait."

This sign on a repair shop door has nothing to do with death but I think it's funny: WE CAN REPAIR ANYTHING. (PLEASE KNOCK HARD ON THE DOOR - THE BELL DOESN'T WORK)

Consider the first three of the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

A.A. is on to something here! They provide a good starting point for spiritual fruitfulness.

In more specific terms, the fruit of the Spirit cannot be generated by our own willpower or "inner goodness". In fact, the doorway to spiritual life is marked "death". Our flesh includes our human frailties, passions and selfish ambitions. These must be put to death on the cross with Christ before His life can be exhibited through us.

Paul says it this way in Galatians 2:20:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. NIV

One of our problems is that we fail to understand the holiness and perfection of God. He is completely without sin and unblemished in any way! When we take stock of ourselves we compare our lives with other people. In the light of this comparison we conclude, "Hey, I am not a bad person. I haven't committed any major crimes, I pay my taxes and I even give money to charity! Heaven is for good people and I am a good person." Did you know the Bible says that we are *all* sinners and that none of us deserves to go to heaven?

Because we were all born with sin in our hearts and we have all broken at least one of the Ten Commandments we are all destined for eternity outside of God's presence.

Someone has observed, “A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.”

The Good News is that God has come up with a plan to ensure that we can spend eternity with Him starting here on earth then in heaven after our life here on earth is over!

There is only one man in human history that was without sin – Jesus Christ. What looked like an unjust act of betrayal, false accusation and murder was actually the plan of God being fulfilled. When Jesus was crucified on the cross He was taking upon Himself the sin of each person that accepts His death on our behalf. Please close your eyes and use your imagination for a few moments. Can you picture Jesus Christ being nailed on to the cross, with the Roman soldiers pounding spikes through His feet and wrists? Watch how they lift Jesus and the cross up then drop Him and the cross into a hole they had dug. You can hardly bear to watch Jesus’ face all twisted with pain and His body all beaten and bloody.

Suddenly you think back to how the high priest would offer a perfect lamb for the sins of the people and you see that Jesus is now the perfect lamb being offered once and for all to pay the price for your sins. You see the ugliness of your sinful nature with its passions and desires and that it too is hanging there on the cross with Jesus.

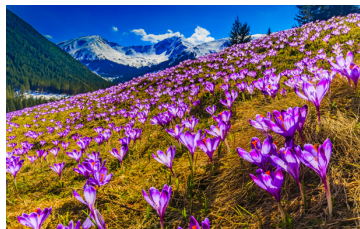
Those who accept Christ’s death on the cross for them have put the old life of separation from God and human effort to bring spiritual results behind them. Are you one of these people?

It’s possible to be like Jesus when there is:

Fruit

Death

Life (Galatians 5:25)



Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

The New Testament was originally written in the Greek language. It is interesting to note that the same Greek word that Paul uses here for “Spirit” can also be used for “breath” or “wind”. The key to a fruitful life is not simply

to try harder. The starting point is to rely upon the Holy Spirit just like you would rely upon the very air that you breathe for life.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), as you know, walked barefoot most of the time, which produced an impressive set of calluses on his feet. He also ate very little, which made him rather frail and with his odd diet, he suffered from bad breath. This made him a super calloused fragile mystic hexed by halitosis.

Years ago, my son, Braden, and I were trying out a kite that he had been given. We first tried it in the yard that was surrounded by tall trees. There was not enough of a breeze and what little breeze there was the tall trees were blocking. It wasn't until we got into the open field and away from the obstructions that the kite was able to ride on the breeze.

What obstructions prevent you from being carried higher by the wind of the Holy Spirit? Have you given up *trying* to be a loving, joyful and peaceful person? The moment you reach this conclusion is the moment the Holy Spirit can begin to live through you.

Even after identifying with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ there is temptation to produce spiritual results in our own effort. We form in our minds a picture of what a "good Christian" is like and we try to be one. We look up to such spiritual heroes as Mother Theresa, Billy Graham or our godly grandmother and we strive to be like them. We even ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" and we try to be like Him.

This is not a new temptation. People in the Roman province of Galatia were off to a good start by coming into a relationship with Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago. They had acknowledged their own death to a past life of sin and separation from God through Christ's death on the cross for them but they drifted back into the idea that they could live like Christ if they only tried hard enough.

Paul had preached the Good News of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection and what it meant for them but he realized he had to correct the error the Galatians had drifted into. This motivated him to write Galatians 3:1-5:

1 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. 2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? 4 Have you suffered so much for nothing — if it really was for nothing? 5 Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? NIV

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit - walk in, march with or keep step with the Holy Spirit. This reshapes how we typically think of

Christ-likeness. We tell ourselves if we just try harder to be like Him then we will be. The Apostle Paul is telling us here that the Holy Spirit is active and moving. The choice is then left with us – will we follow His lead?

Maybe you have sent a card or phoned someone and they replied, “That was just what I needed. Thank you.” These are more than just coincidences. These are times when the Holy Spirit has seen what a person needs and has spoken to someone else to meet that need. In these moments the fruit of the Spirit is plucked from your life, relationships are strengthened and lives are changed. These are not to be extraordinary experiences that happen rarely or even occasionally. These are meant to be a way of life for God’s people as we listen and watch for the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit wants to give you thoughts, impressions and pictures that you would not have ordinarily. Will you ask Him for these and wait expectantly for Him to give them to you?

The Lord is calling you to:

- ✓ Slow down, simplify your life as much as possible and let Him renew your strength.
- ✓ Watch and listen for where He is going and go there with Him.

It’s possible to be like Jesus when there is:

Fruit

Death

Life

Becoming a godly person begins with recognizing your source.

