



SESSION 5: Supernatural Lifestyle 3

Read Galatians 5:22-25

Love, joy and peace

Jesus told his disciples that his followers should love one another, (John 12:34-35). Early commentators about the church noted how much these Christians love each other, (Tertullian 160-220AD). One of the most significant areas where love is required is forgiveness. The Holy Spirit can give us the power to forgive as his love is poured into our hearts, (Romans 5:5).

The early Pentecostals of the last century were part of a movement that was marked by great joy and enthusiasm. This was expressed in an avalanche of new songs and choruses that proclaimed the gospel and exalted the Lord. It seems that there is a real link between being baptised in the Holy Spirit and an experience of joy, sometimes even leading to hilarious laughter or even tears of joy!

Just before going to the cross, Jesus told his disciples that they would have peace. (*'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid'* John 14:27.) It can be a powerful witness when Christians remain calm and trust in God in circumstances that would otherwise cause real panic. The Holy Spirit grows this fruit of peace in our hearts.

Patience, kindness and goodness

Patience is linked to peace, really, as it is the outflow of inner peace. Our God is a patient God, and by his Spirit we can be equipped to wait for his perfect timing. A patient person can endure much pain and suffering holding on to God's promises. A patient person is slow to anger as they wait for God to work in their life.

There is transforming power in the simple fruit of kindness and Christians have been discovering how effective this can be in their own lives and families, as well as in churches and communities. Debbie Duncan says: '*This kindness is explosive. It's not meek and humble – it blasts a huge hole in the bleakness of death, letting in light, tearing down curtains, rolling away huge boulders. It takes command of death and casts*

it aside. It's powerful, extraordinary, mind-blowing. It changes the lives of men and women, boys and girls who have come to know that God is kind, sending his son to die the worst death imaginable for us'.³

The spiritual fruit of goodness, as described in Galatians 5:22-23, is not merely moral behaviour but an excellence of character, an uprightness of heart and life. It's characterised by actions motivated by a desire to help others, seeking their benefit over self-interest. This goodness reflects God's nature, expressed through righteous actions and a desire to be a blessing to others.

Faithfulness, gentleness and self-control

'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.' Matthew 5:5-9

In addition to kindness, and patience, wouldn't it be great to see evidence of real gentleness and self-control in our relationships and even our church business meetings? It's hard to convince others of the love and patience of God, and his amazing grace, if we are constantly flying off the handle ourselves, or if we have a very short fuse.

And self-control is also an important part of our discipleship when it comes to our personal walk and keeping in a place of holiness and readiness to serve God instead of following our own lusts and desires. This spiritual fruit might make all the difference the next time temptation strikes, or we're faced with an opportunity to sin that might seem otherwise to be so seductive and attractive. (See the story of Joseph in Genesis 39.)

For further study and discussion

- **Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.** What does Paul prize above tongues, prophecy, and knowledge? Why do you think that even prophecy, faith and self-sacrifice are put below love in these verses?
- **Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.** What characteristics of love does Paul describe here? How might these aspects of character affect church and/or family life?
- **Read: 1 Corinthians 13:8-13.** How does Paul help us to keep the gifts of the Spirit in a right perspective?
- How has the spiritual fruit of kindness affected you? Who do you know who really seems to exemplify the presence of this fruit in their lives?
- What biblical examples can you think of that exhibit or illustrate 'gentleness and self-control'?

³Debbie Duncan & Cathy Le Feuvre, *The Gift of Kindness*, (Authentic Media, Milton Keynes, 2022) 19.