The fruit of the Spirit

The second part of the fruit of the people Spirit is Joy.

Like “love”, which heads the list, this word is about God’s much more than feelings. As you look at the way this fruit is put on display in in the New Testament is quickly become clear that Joy can exist at the same time as we go through suffering, sorrow and trials (James 1:2-4, Romans 5:3-5, 1 Peter 1:6-9). So Joy is a constant in the life of a believer, irrespective of what is going on in our lives. Here’s a brief definition:

Joy is a deep down liberating sense of wellbeing that lives and grows in the heart of a person who knows that they are in a good relationship with God.

Q Is “Joy” a word people tend to use in everyday life? How do people use it?

Q Read James 1:2-4. How does this use of the word clash with the way it is usually understood? Why does James associate a strong sense of Joy with the trials of life?

Q What’s the difference between Joy and Happiness?

Q Look at some of these verses. What do they say about the source of Joy, and how it grows?

John 15:9-11
Romans 15:13
2 Corinthians 8:2
1 Thessalonians 1:6

Q What kinds of things will rob us of Joy?

Q How do we grow this part of “the fruit”? What practical action will you take?

The third part of the fruit of the Spirit is Peace.

We tend to think of peace as simply being an end to conflict and strife. But the concept of peace in the Bible goes further. The Idea of Shalom in the Hebrew is one not just of a cessation of hostilities, but of mending that which is broken and making it whole and prosperous.

We have peace with God through what Jesus has done for us on the cross. This does not mean that God has reluctantly removed His wrath from us – it means that God now welcomes us into relationship with Him as His children!

To have the peace of God growing in our hearts is to have a “peace that transcends understanding”!

For we know that the God who rules all things is our heavenly Father – He is our shelter in times of trouble.

Here’s a brief definition:

Peace is a confidence and rest in the wisdom and control of God, rather than your own.
Q The opposite of this fruit of peace is anxiety and fear. Why do you think these are such a big problem in our world today?

Q What are some of the ways that people seek to restore peace in their hearts? To what extent do these things work? Why don’t these things bring genuine, lasting peace?

Q Read Philippians 4:4-7. How does thankfulness grow this fruit of peace in the Christian?

Q Read v8-9. What are the most lovely, excellent and praiseworthy things that we can think about? How does meditating on these things grow the peace of God in us?

Q Read v10-13. Did contentment come naturally to Paul? How did he learn this secret? Where did Paul learn to look for help with everything in life? How can we learn to do the same?

The fourth part of the fruit of the Spirit is Patience. We all know too well what patience means ...and we really need to grow it! C H Spurgeon called patience: “A grace as difficult as it is necessary, and as hard to come by as it is precious to grow” On Sunday we looked first of all at how God displays His incredible patience with sinners and then we thought about how we might grow this fruit in 3 areas of our lives; within ourselves, in our relationship with others and with the circumstances and suffering of life. Here’s a brief definition: 
*Patience is the ability to face trouble without blowing up or hitting out.*

Q The opposite of this fruit of patience is impatience! Where do you see this today? Why does it seem to be such a big problem? How is impatience a sign of immaturity?

Q Read Philippians 2:12-13. Can we grow this fruit on our own? What two things are necessary if we are to become more like Christ?

Q Read James 5:7-8. How is the farmer a good picture of patience? What is he relying on whilst he waits?

Q Why do you think James puts v9 right in the middle of his teaching about patience?

Q Read v10-11. How is perseverance related to patience? What do you know about Job’s perseverance? What was it that brought Job through his ordeal? (look at Job 42:1-6).

Q Read Colossians 3:12-14. What practical instruction does Paul give here and how might you apply it in your life?
The fifth part of the fruit of the Spirit is **Kindness**.
Christian Kindness is another virtue that goes much further the version that is found in the world. We all recognise a kind act as an act that does something nice for another person, but God calls us to something more robust as He grows this fruit in the hearts of His people. Our Kindness is to be modelled on the kindness that God has shown to us, which we see clearly portrayed at the cross.
In kindness God takes on flesh and meets our deepest need, demanding nothing from us in payment as He gives His life for us on the cross.
Here’s a brief definition:

“Kindness is the ability to serve others practically even though it costs, because I have a deep inner security.”

Q Some of the opposites and counterfeits of this fruit are envy, manipulation, self-congratulation and superficial tolerance... what do these look like and why are they harmful?

Q Read Ephesians 4:31. What must we first get rid of if this fruit is to grow in us?

Q Read v32. What is to be the model for the kindness that we show to one another?

Q Read Titus 3:3-7. How does Paul describe himself in v3? What changed him? What are the ongoing results?

Q How does a deeper understanding of what God has done for us in Christ produce this fruit in us? How can you get a deeper understanding the kindness of God?