

SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Exploring what spiritual maturity is, and how one becomes mature, and what are the characteristics of a mature disciple

Good Things It Is Not

Giftings
Bible Knowledge

What Is Spiritual Maturity?

The Key to Becoming Spiritually Mature

Yeshua - the Way, the Truth, and the Life
Abiding in Yeshua

The Ninefold Fruit of Spiritual Maturity

Love

Joy
Peace
Longsuffering
Kindness
Goodness
Faithfulness
Gentleness
Self Control

Spiritual Maturity - Good Things It Is Not!

There are good things which are often mistaken for spiritual maturity - but I stress that these are good things - however, they are not spiritual maturity

- **Spiritual Gifts**
 - **Spiritual Gifts are Good!!!**
 - They are for the purpose of edifying and building up the Body of Christ - but...
 - **Spiritual Maturity is Independent of Gifting**
 - Sometimes - those with gifts parade them and like to be seen to be gifted...they become proud of their gift
 - **Spiritual Gifts - Gifts We Have**
 - **Romans 12: 3-8** - Paul lists 7 Gifts which are God given attributes
 - Prophecy
 - Ministry (Service)
 - Teaching
 - Exhortation
 - Giving
 - Leadership
 - Mercifulness
 - These are natural abilities given by God's grace, which He blesses and hones for the benefit of the church
 - There are different gifts - but they are ours by the grace of God
 - Gifts are Given to Individuals - for the Benefit of All

- It's a natural gift - which God gives by His grace - so there is no need for bragging or showing off
 - The gift is not 'yours' - it's for giving away to build up the body
- Paul makes clear that those so gifted are to be Humble - don't think too highly of yourself, he says
- Paul also highlights that we are One Body with Many Members
- **Spiritual Gifts - Gifts We Receive**
 - **1 Corinthians 12: 4-11** - Paul lists 9 Gifts given by the Holy Spirit
 - Word of Wisdom
 - Word of Knowledge
 - Faith
 - Healings
 - Miracles
 - Prophecy
 - Discerning of Spirits
 - Speaking in Tongues
 - Interpretation of Tongues
 - These are manifestations of the Holy Spirit given by God
 - There are different gifts - but they are given by the Holy Spirit as He wills
 - Gifts are Given to Individuals - for the Benefit of All
 - It's a gift of the Spirit - it is unearned and unmerited
 - The gift is not 'yours' - it's for giving away to build up the body
 - Paul again makes Oneness clear - one Lord, one Spirit and one God
- **Spiritual Gifts - Gifts We Become**
 - **Ephesians 4: 11-12** - Paul lists 5 Gifts given by Yeshua to the Body
 - Apostles
 - Prophets
 - Evangelists
 - Pastors
 - Teachers
 - These are different giftings that individuals develop or become - they are Yeshua's gifts to build up and edify His Body
 - Gifts are Individuals with Differing Abilities - for the Benefit of the Body
 - If you are such a gift - you are called to build up the Body
 - Your ability is not 'yours' - it's for giving away to build up the body
- There are other Spiritual Gifts - listed in various scripture passages; e.g. 1 Corinthians 7: 7-8, 12: 37-41, 13: 3; Ephesians 3: 6-8; 1 Peter 4: 8-11
- **Spiritual gifts don't necessarily mean an individual is Spiritually Mature**

- Indeed some who are 'gifted' demonstrate a degree of immaturity, through pride or conceit, or through character weaknesses, or through falling into deception
- Bible Knowledge
 - Bible Knowledge is Good!!!
 - The Lord has given us two witnesses to teach us and guide us - the Holy Spirit and His Word, the Bible
 - Reading & Studying scripture is one of the most important ways that we grow in faith and understanding - but...
 - Spiritual Maturity is Independent of Bible Knowledge
 - Sometimes - those with Bible knowledge are intolerant of others, or those who disagree with them...they become proud of their knowledge
 - Every Disciple of Yeshua should Read & Study God's Word
 - Study God's Word - so you can handle (understand & interpret) it rightly
- 'Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.'* **2 Timothy 2: 15**
 - God's Word is Living and Active - it pierces deep into heart and soul
- 'For the word of God is **living and powerful**, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.'* **Hebrews 4: 12-13**
 - God's Word is Life Changing as we reading and study it
- God's Word is Profitable
- 'All Scripture is **given by inspiration of God**, and is profitable for **doctrine**, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, **thoroughly equipped** for every good work.'* **2 Timothy 3: 16-17**
 - Inspiration - literally 'God breathed' - the meaning of the Greek word used (*theopneustos*); it is the Word of 'God' - over 40 different writers but one author
 - Profitable for Doctrine - scripture provides the comprehensive and complete body of divine truth necessary for life and godliness
 - Profitable for Reproof - rebuke for wrong behaviour or wrong belief - the scriptures expose sin that can then be dealt with through confession and repentance
 - Profitable for Correction - the restoration of something to its proper condition - scripture not only rebukes wrong behaviour but also points the way back to godly living
 - Profitable for Instruction in Righteousness - scripture provides positive training ('instruction' originally referred to training a child) in godly behaviour - not just rebuke & correction of wrong behaviour
 - It Will Thoroughly Equip for Service
- Bible Knowledge doesn't necessarily mean an individual is Spiritually Mature
 - Indeed some who are knowledgeable of God's Word demonstrate a degree of immaturity...through arrogance, pride or conceit, or

through character weaknesses, or through falling into deception (the main weapon of Satan [the Deceiver] against disciples)

What is Spiritual Maturity

- **Dictionary Definitions of Maturity** - these help us to understand what spiritual maturity should look like
 - **The State of Being Mature** - completion of a process
 - **Ripeness** - ready for plucking
 - **Full Development** - in no need of further growth or refining
 - **Perfected Condition** - the final finished state of being

- **Spiritual Maturity - Bible Definitions**

There are many verses about spiritual maturity - I've chosen these passages from Paul's letters which speak of what it is to be spiritually mature

- **Ephesians 4: 13-15**

*'Till we all come to the **unity of the faith** and of the **knowledge of the Son of God**, to a perfect man, to **the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**; that we should **no longer be children**, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, **speaking the truth in love**, may **grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ**.'*

Ephesians 4: 13-15

- Paul is writing to the Ephesians about gifts Yeshua gives to the church for building it up - these gifts are people
- However in his letter Paul gives a real insight into what it is to be spiritually mature
- Things to Note from these verses about spiritual maturity:
 - **Unity of the Faith** - maturity will necessarily mean we are one with our brothers and sisters in spiritual understanding
 - **Knowledge of the Son of God** - maturity will necessarily mean we have a deep relationship with Yeshua
 - **The Stature of Fullness of Christ** - maturity will necessarily mean we become more like Yeshua
 - **No Longer a Child** - maturity will necessarily mean we grow up; becoming wise in doctrine & biblical understanding, and becoming aware of trickery, cunning and deceitfulness (spiritual mixture)
 - **Speaking Truth in Love** - maturity will necessarily mean we speak truth in love, persuading others of truth in a loving way
 - **Growing Up into Christ** - maturity will necessarily mean we become more yielded and obedient to God's will, as Yeshua was

- **Colossians 2: 6-10**

*'As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so **walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith**, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. **Beware lest anyone cheat you** through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all **the fullness of the Godhead** bodily; and you are **complete in Him**, who is the head of all principality and power.'*

Colossians 2: 6-10

- Paul is writing to the Colossians to encourage them in their relationship with Yeshua
- Things to note from these verses about spiritual maturity:
 - **Walking in Christ** - maturity is to live a life patterned after His, following in His footsteps
 - **Rooted in Christ** - maturity must have its root in Yeshua, the most spiritually mature man ever...we cannot grow if we are not joined to the vine
 - **Built Up in Christ** - maturity is founded on who and what we are in Yeshua, He is our foundation
 - **Established in the Faith** - maturity develops upward from the foundation of biblical truth as taught and recorded by the apostles
 - **Not Cheated by Human Philosophy or Empty Deceit** - maturity means guarding ourselves against false teaching which robs us through seductive worldly thinking or deception
 - **The Fullness of Christ** - maturity recognises that only in Yeshua is there the fullness of the divine nature and attributes to which we aspire (see *John 1: 14-16*)
 - **Complete in Christ** - Believers are 'complete in Christ' positionally (by the imputed perfect righteousness of Christ - see *Colossians 1: 22*) - but spiritual maturity and being 'complete in Christ' comes through the total sufficiency of all the heavenly resources for spiritual maturity (see *2 Peter 1: 3-4*)

■ **Philippians 3: 12-15**

*'Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, **forgetting those things which are behind** and **reaching forward to those things which are ahead**, I press toward **the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus**. Therefore let us, **as many as are mature, have this mind**; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.'*

Philippians 3: 12-15

- Paul is writing to the Philippians to encourage them to keep going
- Things to note from these verses about spiritual maturity:
 - **Not Yet Attained Perfection** - maturity is a process and we must keep moving forward
 - **Press On** - maturity is attained by continually pressing on into an ever deeper knowledge of and relationship with Yeshua
 - **Forget the Past** - maturity means not letting problems or failings in the past determine our future
 - **Reach Forward to What Lies Ahead** - maturity comes when our Faith looks forward to our Hope
 - **The Prize is Rapture or Resurrection** - maturity is knowing we are not citizens of this world...Yeshua's voice will call us to our eternal future with Him
 - **Have This Mind** - those who are mature will keep their thoughts and actions focussed on their future in the Lord

The Key to Becoming Spiritually Mature

- **Yeshua is the Way, the Truth & the Life**

'Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.' **John 14: 6**

Recognising that Yeshua is the Way, the Truth and the Life is vital for our growth into Spiritual Maturity

- **The Way - Yeshua is the route to the Father, the only way**

- **No Other Name - not Allah, not Buddha, not any other god**

*"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is **no other name** under heaven given among men **by which we must be saved.**"* **Acts 4: 12**

- **The Truth - Yeshua is the way to God because He is the truth of God**

*'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, **full of grace and truth.**'* **John 1: 14**

- **The Life - through Yeshua we have connection with God's life**

'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.' **John 1: 4**

- **Eternal Life - only through Yeshua is there 'Everlasting Life'**

*'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him** should not perish but have **everlasting life.**'* **John 3: 16**

- **'Everlasting Life' - refers not only to the eternal quantity, but also the divine quality of life - it means literally "life of the age to come" and refers to resurrection and heavenly existence in perfect glory and holiness**

- **Spiritual Life Now - by the Holy Spirit in Us**

*"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for **He dwells with you and will be in you.**"* **John 14: 16-17**

- **Helper - Greek *paraklētos*, meaning helper, comforter, advocate or intercessor**

- **He, the Holy Spirit, is the Life of God within us Now**

- **Spiritual Maturity comes by allowing the life of God within us to grow and develop into its fullness**

- **Abiding in Yeshua**

*"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. **Abide in Me, and I in you.** As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*

*"I am the vine, you are the branches. **He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit;** for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." **As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.** If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.* **John 15: 1-10**

- **Abiding is the Key to Spiritual Maturity**

- **We cannot grow spiritually, from babes to infants and on to maturity, unless we Abide in Yeshua**

- Through this metaphor of the vine and branches, Yeshua sets forth the basis of Christian living and growth into fruitful spiritual maturity
- Yeshua used the imagery of agricultural life at the time; i.e., vines and vine crops
 - Interestingly, in the Old Testament the vine is used commonly as a symbol for Israel
 - There is a hint here (a *remez*), given by Yeshua, that all the branches (including gentile ones) have a Hebraic root
- Mature branches are fruitful
 - Yeshua is not here primarily speaking of being fruitful in reproduction (that is, in evangelistic terms)
 - Yeshua is principally speaking of the fruit that gives glory to the Father (v.8); that is the fruit of a life that shows the Father's glory, a life that reveals His character
- Lessons in Abiding
 - Yeshua is the Vine - He is the source of life and fruitfulness
 - The Father is the Gardener - He tends & prunes to encourage fruitfulness
 - The Branch must Abide in the Vine - it cannot bear fruit of itself
 - Abide (Greek: *menō*) [pronounced *men'-o*] means to abide, stay, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand and tarry
 - Abiding evidences that Salvation has taken place - those who do not abide show that they are not part of the vine

*'They went out from us, but **they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.'*** **1 John 2: 19**
 - Abiding evidences that the process of Sanctification is taking place - being made holy, changed into the likeness of His son, being fruitful

*'But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, **you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.'*** **Romans 6: 22**
 - Abiding will mean that Yeshua's Words Abide in Us - His life giving and life changing words
 - Yeshua's words, abiding in us, are sanctifying (see *John 17: 17*)
 - Abiding means we will be One - one with Yeshua and one with the Father, and also one with each other
 - Abiding means we are Attuned to Yeshua and to the Father - the desires of the Lord become our desires
 - Hence, so attuned, we will ask and be answered because we are asking according to the Lord's will and His ways
 - Abiding with Fruitfulness brings Glory to the Father
 - Yeshua is our Example - He glorified the Father by His life because He revealed the Father's character and truth (see *John 17: 4*)
 - We glorify the Father when the light of the life of Yeshua is seen in us - our lives reflecting God's character

'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.'

Matthew 5: 16

- Abiding in Yeshua's love - to know and experience love is the most wonderful blessing, especially the love of the Lord
- Abiding in Obedience (v.10) - keeping His commandments is the way to abide in Yeshua's love
- Unless we Abide in Him...and He in Us, there is No Growth, No Fruitfulness and No Spiritual Maturity
 - Yeshua Abiding in Us - is life changing

The Ninefold Fruit of Spiritual Maturity

- The Fruit of the Spirit - is the fruit life of God within us, by the Holy Spirit, and it will show in our character and reflect God's character

- The Old Life (the flesh) will be replaced by the New Life (in the Spirit)

'I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.'

Galatians 5: 16-17

- The Fruit of Abiding in the Vine, the New Life in the Spirit, is the ninefold 'Fruit of the Spirit'

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

Galatians 5: 22-23

- It is this ninefold fruit which is the true mark of spiritual maturity
 - We are no longer reliant on law keeping for our justification
 - We are set free, by the grace of God, to live lives that reveal His character and glorify Him
 - Mature Fruit is true Spiritual Maturity
 - The Fruit of the Holy Spirit within (that is, Abiding in Yeshua) are these ninefold characteristics which reflect the Father's character
 - You cannot manufacture these fruits - they are supernatural not natural - a result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as we allow Him to work in us
- 1. Love - the Principal defining Characteristic of God

'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.'

1 John 4: 7-9

- Love - the Greek word used is *agapē* is sacrificial love

- It is the love of choice; referring not to an emotional affection, physical attraction, or a familial bond, but to respect, devotion, and affection that leads to willing, self-sacrificial service (laying down our lives)
- The Father demonstrates His *agapē* love for us by giving us His only begotten Son to be the sacrifice for our sin
- Yeshua demonstrated His *agapē* love for us through His life and death - greater love has no man than he lay down his life for his friend!

- Love is Yeshua's New Commandment to us - it is to be the principal mark of the believers; love, not just for God, but for each other

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13: 34-35

- When an unbeliever walks into our fellowship - our love for each other should be one of the main things that they see and sense

- Love is the Fruit of Abiding

'And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.'

1 John 4: 16

- Selfless Love is not natural to the flesh - we are naturally lovers of self, not lovers of God or of others
- Love, sacrificial *agapē* love, comes from Abiding in Yeshua

- Love is the 'more excellent way' (1 Corinthians 12: 31)

- More Excellent than all the spiritual gifts
- More Excellent - because it is the principal mark of God's character
- Without Love (1 Corinthians 13: 1-3)
 - We are 'sounding brass or clanging cymbals'
 - We are nothing
 - We profit nothing

- The Qualities of Love Underpin all the other Fruits - because love never fails

'Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.'

1 Corinthians 13: 4-8a

- Note how the qualities of love speak of the other fruits of the Spirit
 - It suffers long - longsuffering
 - It is kind - kindness
 - It does not envy - goodness
 - It does not parade itself - peace
 - It is not puffed up - goodness
 - It does not behave rudely - gentleness
 - It does not seek its own - love
 - It is not provoked - self control
 - It thinks no evil - goodness
 - It does not rejoice in iniquity - goodness
 - It rejoices in the truth - joy
 - It bears all things - peace
 - It believes all things - faithfulness
 - It hopes all things - faithfulness
 - It endures all things - longsuffering

- Abiding is the key to this fruit of Love - abiding in Yeshua's love...and His love abiding in Us

• 2. Joy - the Inner Cheerfulness and Delight of Knowing Yeshua

'In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of

Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. **Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.**' **1 Peter 1: 6-9**

- Joy is Founded in our Relationship with Yeshua
 - Abiding is the Key to Joy - as Yeshua said after speaking about Abiding

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” **John 15: 11**

- Joy is founded on His Sure and Unchanging Love for Us
- The Reality of who we are in Him gives us Inner Joy beyond any fleeting pleasure the world can give

'His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. **2 Peter 1: 3-4**

- Joy is Not the Result of Favourable Circumstances
 - In the world we will experience trouble...but we can be of good cheer (have joy) because Yeshua has overcome the world

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” **John 16: 33**

- This Joy is ours even when circumstances are the most painful and severe

'And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,' **1 Thessalonians 1: 6**

- Sometimes Joy is a Sacrifice to the Lord - an act of will despite our circumstances

- Our Joy is 'in the Lord'

'Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!' **Philippians 4: 4**

- We Rejoice in the Lord - in His love for us, and His promises to us
- Joy gives Strength - this fruit lifts us up

'Then he said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”' **Nehemiah 8: 10**

- Abiding is the key to Joy - the Lord's released Joy in our Hearts!

• 3. Peace - the Inner Calm of Knowing Yeshua

- Peace is founded on Yeshua - 'He is our Peace'

'For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation... For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.'

Ephesians 2: 14, 18

- It is God's Peace - it comes from Him, it is part of His divine nature
- The Greek word *eirēnē*, [pronounced *i-rah'-nay*], means peace, quietness or rest - it comes from a root word meaning 'to join' or 'make one' - and is the opposite of the root of the Greek word translated 'anxiety' which means 'to part' or 'disunite'
- The hint (remez) here is:
 - Peace comes when we are one with God
 - Anxiety comes when are parted from God
- Through Yeshua we have peace with God

'Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,' **Romans 5: 1**

- God's Peace is Supernatural - it 'Surpasses Understanding'

'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.'

Philippians 4: 6-7

- His Peace doesn't just 'Pass' understanding, it 'Surpasses' understanding...it goes way beyond any 'natural' peace - it is not simply a greater peace, it is a whole different quality and degree of peace
- God's peace is supernatural - not natural - because it is beyond our understanding (our intellect) and beyond human reason
 - It is beyond the natural...it is not normal or natural to have peace in many of life's stressful situations - and certainly not for the non-believer
- Peace, like Joy, is not the result of Favourable Circumstances - as the Holy Spirit grows this fruit in us, it enables us to remain still in the midst of life's storms

'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling.' Selah

Psalms 46: 1-3

- The Fruit of Peace guards our Hearts (emotions) and Minds (thinking) - it keeps us on an even keel - but, please, don't feel under condemnation if you struggle to have such peace...anxiety is not a sin, and believers can suffer from anxiety and depression...because we are human

- Peace - a Gift of God by the Holy Spirit's Indwelling Presence

'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' **John 14: 27**

- It is ours as a Gift - when we Pray and Ask with Thankfulness
- Not as the World Gives - Yeshua gives us his peace continually...always pouring the grace into our lives day by day
- It is a Divine Exchange - our anxieties and worries for His Peace (*shalom*) - so ask with thankfulness, and receive His gift of Peace
- Abiding is the key to this fruit of Peace - so let the Lord grow this fruit of Peace within you, as you abide in Him and He and His peace abide in you

- 4. Longsuffering - the Ability to Endure which comes through Knowing Yeshua

- The Greek word used (*makrothumia*) [pronounced *mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah*] means longsuffering, patience, forbearance and fortitude
- Longsuffering is a Character Trait of God
 - God's Forbearance with us allowed us time to repent

'The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.'

2 Peter 3: 9

- Paul's Testimony was that his salvation displays God's gracious and merciful patience with the most wretched sinners (himself)

'However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.'

1 Timothy 1: 16

- Yeshua is our Model of Patient Endurance

- Yeshua endured the cross 'for the joy set before Him'

*'Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, **let us lay aside every weight**, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, **and let us run with endurance** the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, **who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross**, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'*

Hebrews 12: 1-2

- Patient Endurance is needed to run the Race of Faith
- We too should 'lay aside every weight and run with endurance'
- Patient Endurance is Not 'Natural' - it's 'Supernatural'
 - Longsuffering is not a 'popular' character trait
 - It is not natural to the flesh
 - It is regarded by the world as foolish or as a weakness
 - Christian Longsuffering is only truly possible through the Indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit
 - It is a Fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in us
 - It is often Honed through Trial and Suffering
 - Believers are encouraged to be longsuffering, bearing with one another
 - The ability to endure injuries inflicted by others and the willingness to accept irritating or painful situations mirrors God's character

*'I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to **walk worthy of the calling with which you were called**, with all lowliness and gentleness, **with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love**, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'*

Ephesians 4: 1-3

- Bearing with one another in love - tolerating each others' idiosyncrasies, passing over each others' faults and failings

*'Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, **put on** tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, **longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another**, if anyone has a complaint against another; **even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.**'*

Colossians 3: 12

- Forgiving one another is a vital part of being longsuffering - letting go of hurts and offence by forgiving...just as the Lord does with us
- It is a part of our 'calling' - to be like the Lord in longsuffering
- As the Lord is longsuffering toward us - so we are to be with our brothers and sisters
- Abiding is the key to this fruit of longsuffering - abiding in His love which can Bear all things and Endure all things, even the worst of trials
- 5. Kindness - the Tender Concern for Others which comes through Knowing Yeshua
 - Kindness is a Character Trait of God
 - The Greek word used (*chrēstotēs*) [pronounced *kh-ray-stot'-ace*] means kindness, gentleness and goodness - it is from a root word which means usefulness, that is usefulness in character or demeanour

- Hence, Kindness is a characteristic which implies moral excellence
- In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for loving-kindness is *chêsêd*, it occurs 249 times and is also translated as mercy, kindness and goodness

*'For **Your lovingkindness** is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth.'*

Psalm 26: 3

*'I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for **Your lovingkindness** and Your truth; for You have magnified Your word above all Your name.'*

Psalm 138: 2

- God's lovingkindness is often linked in scripture with His mercy

- **Kindness is Tender Concern**

- The Lord's Kindness to us shows us His Mercy & Love

*'that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of **His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**'*

Ephesians 2: 7

- The Lord treats us with great Tender Concern

*'**A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench;**'*

Isaiah 42: 3a

- Yeshua's Easy Yoke & Light Burden

*"Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for **I am gentle and lowly in heart**, and you will find rest for your souls. For **My yoke is easy and My burden is light.**"*

Matthew 11: 28-30

- **Our Kindness to One Another reflects God's Character**

- Kindness - not natural in the flesh, we are by nature full of selfish ambition (see *Galatians 5: 19-21*)

- Kindness - only possible through the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit
 - We are encouraged to relate to our brothers and sisters in the Lord with tender hearts

'And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.'

Ephesians 4: 32

- Kindness is a Fruit which He grows in us - as we allow Him to change our focus of concern from ourselves to others

- Abiding is the key to this fruit of Kindness - because He is Kind, He brings light and lightness to our soul

- **6. Goodness - the Moral Excellence which comes through Knowing Yeshua**

- The Greek word used (*agathōsunē*) [pronounced *ag-ath-o-soo'-nay*] means goodness and virtue

- Goodness is a Character Trait of God

- The Lord God abounds in Goodness

*Then He said, "**I will make all My goodness pass before you**, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."*

Exodus 33: 19

*'And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and **abounding in goodness** and truth,"'*

Exodus 34: 6

- The Lord's Goodness is linked closely with His Mercy throughout scripture

*'Surely **goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life**; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.'*

Psalm 23: 6

- Goodness is a fruit which speaks of Moral Excellence

- Goodness comes from Righteousness of Heart

*'For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for **the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth**), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.'*

Ephesians 5: 8-10

- **A Good Heart produces the Fruit of Goodness**

'A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.'

Luke 6: 45

- **Goodness produces Great Blessing**

- **We Receive the Blessings of God's Goodness**

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ'

Ephesians 1: 3

- **God's Goodness should Overflow from Our Hearts**

'Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.'

Galatians 6: 10

- **How Good and Pleasant It Is to Dwell in Unity (Psalm 133) - we experience great blessing in the goodness of our fellowship**

- **Abiding is the key to growing this fruit of Goodness - as we allow the Holy Spirit to grow virtue in us that reveals and reflects God's Goodness**

- **7. Faithfulness - the Moral Conviction which comes through Knowing Yeshua**

- **The Greek word used (*pistis*) [pronounced *pis'-tis*] means persuasion, moral conviction and constancy - hence the KJV translates it simply as 'faith'**

- **Faithfulness is a Character Trait of God**

- **The Lord God abounds in Faithfulness**

*'Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; **great is Your faithfulness.**'*

Lamentations 3: 22-23

- **The Lord God is Constant - True to His Word & His Nature**

*'**God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?**'*

Numbers 23: 19

- **Faithfulness is a Fruit which speaks of Moral Conviction**

- **Our Convictions about the Lord will reflect in our Daily Living**

'For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.'

2 Timothy 1: 12

- **Our Faith in God will carry us through Trials**

*'And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that **tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.**'*

Romans 5: 3

- **Our Faithfulness will be Rewarded**

*'**Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**'*

Revelation 2: 10

- **Because Yeshua is Faithful to Us we can, by the fruit of His Spirit in us, be Faithful in service - and we will hear Him say to us "Well Done, good and faithful servant"**

- **Abiding is the key to remaining constant in our faithfulness - not straying away from the narrow path or from serving Him**

- **8. Gentleness - the Meekness which comes through Knowing Yeshua**

- **The Greek word used (*praotēs*) [pronounced *prah-ot'-ace*] means gentleness, meekness and humility**

- Meekness - a humble and gentle attitude that is patiently submissive in every offense, while having no desire for revenge or retribution
- Humility - a modesty about our qualities, attainments and importance

- Yeshua is our Model of Meekness & Humility

- He Laid Aside His Majesty - He Humbled Himself

*'but **made Himself of no reputation**, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself** and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.'*

Philippians 2: 7-8

- The Fruit of Meekness

- Teachability

'Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days.'

Proverbs 19: 20

'But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.'

James 3: 17

- Gentleness of spirit enables us to be humble - how often those with Bible knowledge are arrogant, aggressive or insensitive
- A teachable spirit is the fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in us - we become aware that we don't know it all and have things to learn

- Consideration for Others

- In Gentleness we bear with one another in love - how difficult it is sometimes not to get frustrated with our brothers & sisters!

*'I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, **with all lowliness and gentleness**, with longsuffering, **bearing with one another in love**, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'*

Ephesians 4: 1-3

- Scripture urges us to think of others as better than ourselves

*'Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but **in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself**.'*

Philippians 2: 3

- Submission to the Will of God

*'Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, **put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering**;*

Colossians 3: 12

- Humility of spirit will lead us to obedience of the Lord
- The Meek will Inherit the Earth - because their Trust is in the Lord to deal with this evil world; they wait on Him in humility of spirit because they Abide in Him and their Hope is in Him (*Ps. 37: 9-11*)

- Abiding in Yeshua is our source of Gentleness, Meekness and Humility - it is a true mark of a mature man or woman of God

- 9. Self Control - the Ability to Restrain Passions & Appetites through Knowing Yeshua

- The Greek word used (*egkrateia*) [pronounced *eng-krat'-i-ah*] means self control and temperance(that is, moderation)

- Yeshua is our Model of Self Control

- He Resisted the Devil & His Temptations (see *Matthew 4: 1-11*)
 - Yeshua used scripture to counteract Satan's lies

- He did not Respond to Provocation - as in the Garden of Gethsemane (see *Matthew 26: 52-54*)
 - Yeshua restrained His Power in order to be Obedient to God
 - The Fruit of Self Control
 - Ability to Resist the Flesh

'For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.' **Romans 8: 13**

 - The Holy Spirit grows in us the ability to resist and restrain our fleshly appetites and passion - and instead submit to Yeshua
 - Ability to Resist the Devil

'Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.' **James 4: 7**

 - The Holy Spirit in us enables us to stand and withstand the attacks and fiery darts of the enemy
 - Abiding is the key to the Fruit of Self Control - abiding in Yeshua leads us into spiritual maturity and we gain greater ability to resist fleshly passions and to withstand the enemy
- The Fruit of the Spirit - will bring us into Spiritual Maturity
 - We need to recognise that Yeshua is the Way, the Truth and the Life - and that this is vital for our growth into Spiritual Maturity - *John 14: 6*
 - Spiritual Maturity is to exhibit in our lives the character of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that is the Ninefold Fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians 5: 22-23*) - therefore if our lives:
 - Are not showing this fruit of *agapē* love for each other, or
 - Are not exhibiting joy and peace, or
 - Are not enabling us to be longsuffering, or
 - Our actions do not speak of kindness or goodness within, or
 - Our faithfulness is shaky, or
 - Gentleness is not a mark of our character, or
 - We lack self-control
 - We need to make every effort to Abide in Yeshua - to remain joined to Him the True Vine - all the time
 - We need to come afresh to God - seeking the reality of His Son, Yeshua, abiding in us - and we in Him
 - Be determined in your mind and soul and spirit to reflect in your character the character of the Father and the Son, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit producing in you the Fruit of the Spirit
 - Maturity does not come by spiritual gifts or Bible knowledge - though these are good things which help us
 - Spiritual Maturity is not for 'spiritual giants' or 'super saints' - it is for every believer...that means you, that means me
 - Because it is the work of the Father (the Vinedresser), as we abide in His Son (the True Vine), who causes us - by the work of the Holy Spirit within us - to be fruitful with the ninefold Fruit of the Spirit, which reflect His character and give Him glory by our lives and character