

We are looking at areas of growth and maturity for a Jesus Follower.

Today, we are going to look at two pieces of the puzzle.

Here's the first one:

### **A growing and maturing character through the fruit of the Spirit**

When God chose us as His children, He had a grand plan for us. His plan included a maturation process that would develop Godly character in our lives. To be a productive part of God's kingdom we need to make a commitment to develop the character that reflects Christ in our lives. You've heard the saying, "God loves you just the way you are." That is true, but He loves you so much He doesn't want you to stay the way you are. Biblical discipleship has at its heart the development of Godly character. Without moving toward developing Christ-like character in an individual's life, we really don't have authentic discipleship.

From God's perspective, a natural part of our salvation is the development of godly character in our lives. When He chose us, He had that outcome in mind.

**John 15:16** *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.*

Christianity is not passive. Growing, vibrant and effective Christians are excelling in those things that bring glory to God. Holomua.

**2 Corinthians 8:7** *But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us--see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*

There are many ways that people define "fruit" in the context of the Christian life. The fruit of the Spirit has to do with our character. As maturing Jesus Followers, we must deal with the character issues in our lives. The society we live in, our culture, and our own sinful nature fight against true Godly character. If we are unintentional about developing Godly character in our life, it most likely will not happen.

**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.*

The Bible makes it clear that the healthy growth of a Christian involves producing good fruit and growing in our knowledge of God. As we mature in Christ, our lives should be altered by His presence in us.

**Colossians 1:10** *And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,*

From the context of what Peter is saying in this next section of Scripture, it seems as if we have a choice to make. We can choose to develop Godly character, or we can avoid it. We are free to make our choices, but we are not free to choose the consequences of our choices. If we are growing in character, in increasing measure, then we will be effective and productive in our Christian walk. If we chose to take the path of least resistance and opt for convenience, comfort, and selfishness, then we will flounder in an ineffective and unproductive Christian life.

**2 Peter 1:5-8** *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

### **Hale Pule Question**

**Meditate on the verses above. Ask the Father to show you ways you can cooperate with His plan to develop your character through the fruit of the Spirit maturing in your life.**

**Pray over the specific areas mentioned in Galatians 5:22,23 and 2 Peter 1:5-8 and ask Him to help you be aware of how He wants to work in these areas of your life. (I eliminated the duplicates in the two verses) Write down some of your thoughts on each one.**

*Love*

*Joy*

*Peace*

*Patience*

*Kindness*

*Goodness*

*Faithfulness*

*Gentleness*

*Self-control*

*Faith*

*Knowledge*

*Perseverance*

*Godliness.*

**Here's the second one:** (I combined these two pieces of the puzzle together because Scripture memorization is such a great tool in our journey of spiritual maturation)

### **A growing and maturing lifestyle of Scripture memorization**

God's word is a powerful force in our lives. It is very effective when we are able to commit it to memory and store it deep within us. When we have scripture memorized, we are able to call upon it at any time. We are not restricted to having a Bible in our possession or notes we can look at. We are able to respond to divine appointments at a moment's notice if His word is in our heart. Biblical discipleship not only stresses the importance of scripture memorization but also teaches others how to accomplish it.

When God's word is in our heart, it provides positive spiritual traction that helps us keep from slipping. If His word is in us, the Holy Spirit can draw upon it in our times of temptation.

**Psalm 37:31** *The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip.*

When we store God's word in our hearts, it helps us in our desire to do what is right. If His word is planted in our lives the roots of His word go deep and begin to alter us from the inside out.

**Psalm 40:8** *I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.*

When we are tempted God says that He will provide an escape route for us. (1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.) One of the ways He does this is by bringing His word to the forefront of our minds to steer us in the right direction. We can't underestimate the power of His word as it grows in our lives.

**Psalm 119:11** *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*

### **Hale Pule Question**

**Ask the Father to give you the motivation and courage to begin to memorize Scripture. Ask some Jesus Followers you know how they memorize Scripture. Google different methods. Start simple and be consistent!**