



The Fruit of the Spirit— Connecting Ascension and Pentecost

A Devotional for the Nine Days Between

By Joyce Borger

You may utilize these nine devotionals on their own or in connection with the resource at ReformedWorship.org titled, “[The Fruit of the Spirit—Connecting Ascension and Pentecost: Two Services with Devotionals](http://ReformedWorship.org)”.

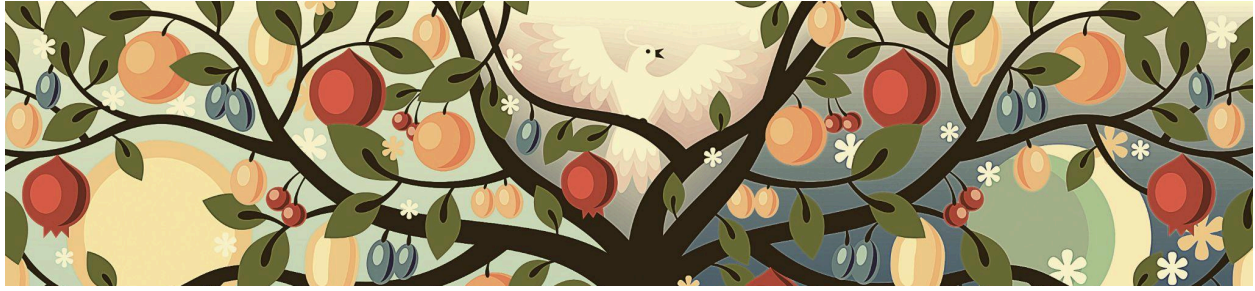


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About the author...

Rev. Joyce Borger is a program manager at the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and an ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America. She curates and develops practical worship planning resources and manages the ReformedWorship.org website. She served as associate editor of the print journal *Reformed Worship* from 2003-2006 and senior editor from 2006-2025. She has edited seven musical collections, including *Lift Up Your Hearts: Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs* (Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2013) and *Psalms for All Seasons* (Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2011).

Introduction

We know that Advent is a time of preparation ahead of Christmas, as Lent is for Easter. But have you ever considered the connection between Ascension Day and Pentecost? Christ's ascension was a fulfillment of his Easter resurrection, but it also looks forward. Before Christ ascended he gave the promise to send his Holy Spirit—a promise fulfilled on Pentecost. But while the disciples waited for the coming Spirit they were to spend time in prayer—a time of preparation. And their waiting wasn't in vain, nine days later the Holy Spirit came.

In some traditions, Christians follow the example of the disciples in dedicating themselves to prayer for the nine days between Ascension Day and Pentecost. During that time they focus on the nine fruits of the Spirit, praying that they may more fully embody those characteristics. This devotional is intended to serve as a guide for individuals, households, and other Christian communities to do just that.

Each day begins the same way. With a short prayer that can be spoken or sung to the tune of “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow” or another tune with an 8.8.8.8 meter. Then there is a spoken prayer litany to the Holy Spirit with a new petition added each day based on that day's fruit. Following each petition is the spoken refrain “Come Holy Spirit, Come”. By repeating that refrain, non-readers of all ages are easily able to join in the litany.

Following the opening prayers there is a scripture reading that connects to the day's fruit of the Spirit. You may choose to end there or to spend time with one or more of the reflective questions.

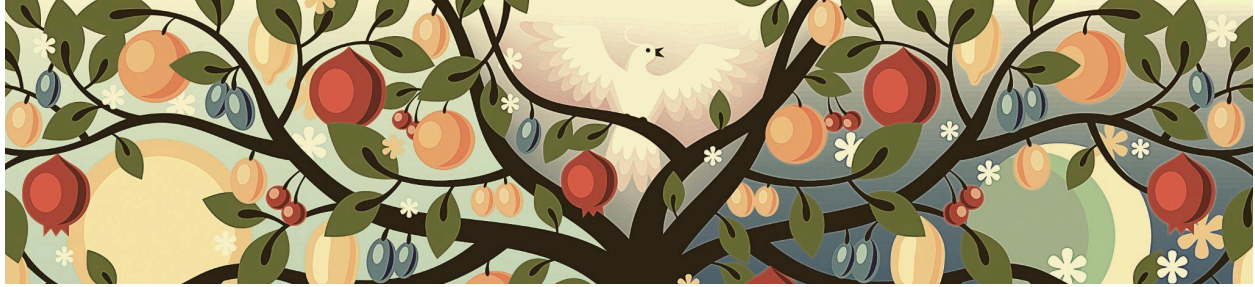
If your fellow participants include younger children, or you want to keep it simple, you could use these questions:

1. Where have you seen this fruit of the Spirit today? (Others)
2. How have you practiced this fruit of the Spirit today? (Myself in the past.)
3. How might you practice this fruit of the Spirit later today or tomorrow? (Myself in the future)

A prayer is provided to close your time of reflection. Options are provided in the green font to help you contextualize your prayer.

This devotional is meant as a tool to connect people of all ages to God's Word and to apply it to their lives. Feel free to adjust, adapt, and make it work for you as you follow the Holy Spirit's leading.

—*Pastor Joyce*



Day 1: Love

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” —John 15:12

SUNG PRAYER

Come Holy Spirit, meet us here
Help us to feel your comfort near.
Open our minds, teach us Christ’s ways
So we may bear your fruit today.

—Words: Joyce Borger © 2023 *Reformed Worship*, Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike.

[Can be sung to the tune “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow” (GENEVAN 134/OLD HUNDREDTH) Louis Bourgeois, 1551, P.D. or another tune with a 8.8.8.8 meter.]

SPOKEN PRAYER

Holy Spirit,
as the disciples waited
between Christ’s ascension
and your coming at Pentecost,
we keep this time in watchful prayer,
asking you to come—
fill our hearts and renew our lives.
Come, Holy Spirit, come.

Teach us how to love.
Come Holy Spirit, Come.

Speak to us through your Word.
Come Holy Spirit, come.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

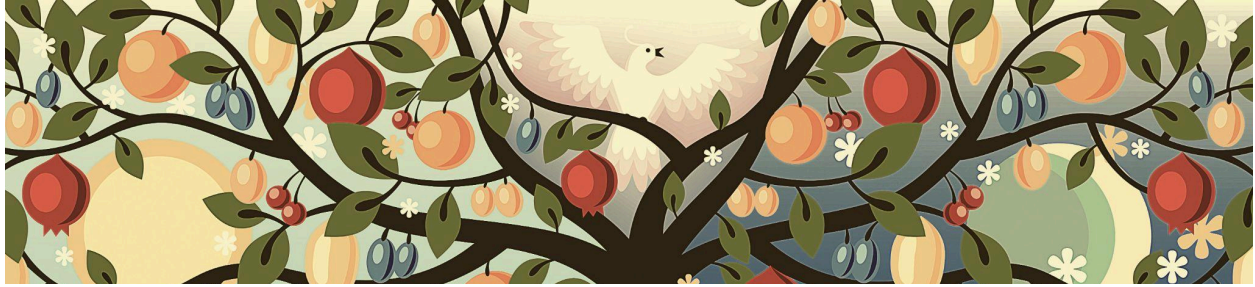
John 15:1-17

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

- In the Bible translation I use, the word “remain” is used a lot. Your translation might use the word “abide” or “dwell”. Can you find all eleven of them? What do you think remaining in Christ’s love looks like and how is that connected to remaining in Christ?
- How does it feel to know that you have been *chosen* to bear fruit?
- Why do you think Christ ended with the command, “Love each other”?
- As individuals or with those who you are doing this reflection with discuss how you might tangibly show that you love others and make plans to do that. If you are doing this as a family make sure to include your children and teens in discerning what you as a family might do and what role they might play.

CLOSING PRAYER

As we (end/start/continue) this day,
Holy Spirit, move within (me/us) and through (me/us),
giving (me/us)
 eyes to see the world as Christ sees it,
 ears to hear the world as Christ hears it,
 feet that go wherever the Spirit may direct,
 and hands to join the Spirit's work in this world,
so that Christ, our ascended Lord,
may receive all glory, honor, and praise.
Amen.



Day 2: Joy

“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”
—John 15:11

SUNG PRAYER

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Come Holy Spirit, Come.

Speak to us through your Word.
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Amen.

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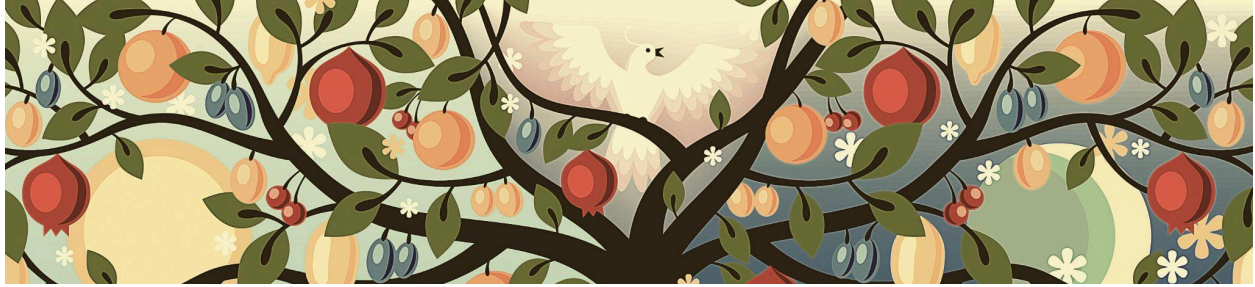
John 15:1-17

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

- In the middle of all this talk of remaining in Christ and the need to love each other, comes this one sentence. “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (v. 11). Spend some time considering how joy is connected to remaining in Christ and loving other people.
- It could be said that happiness occurs as a result of something, something that happens or something we have been given, while joy is a state of being. Joy comes from the inside and isn't affected by a change in our life. Do you have any stories you can share where you have felt this to be true in your own life or the lives of others?
- If you were able to do something yesterday to show love to someone else how did it make you feel? Did it bring your joy? What might you do today to further deepen your joy?

CLOSING PRAYER

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 feet that go wherever the Spirit may direct,
 and hands to join the Spirit's work in this world,
so that Christ, our ascended Lord,
may receive all glory, honor, and praise.
Amen.



Day 3: Peace

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” —Philippians 4:7

SUNG PRAYER

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Fill us with your joy.
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Guard our hearts and minds with your peace.
Come Holy Spirit, Come.

Speak to us through your Word.
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Amen.

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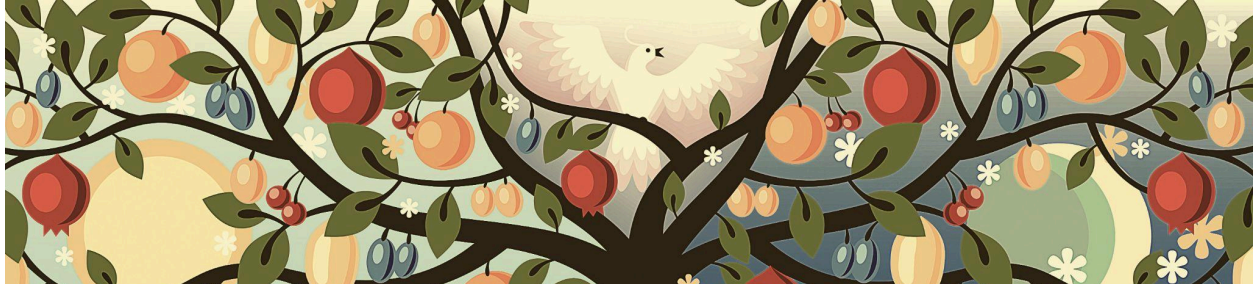
Philippians 4:4-9

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

- In this passage peace is the result of other actions that we have some agency or control over. What practical suggestions does this passage give for being at peace and what might they look like in your life? Which suggestions are easier for you to follow than others?
- What do you think it means that “the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (v. 7)?
- There are other fruit of the spirit mentioned in this passage. How do you think they are connected to peace?
- Spend some time in personal reflection considering how you might cultivate a peace that “transcends understanding”. Choose one thing you can do and focus on that from now to Pentecost so it may become a habit.

CLOSING PRAYER

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 ears to hear the world as Christ hears it,
 feet that go wherever the Spirit may direct,
 and hands to join the Spirit's work in this world,
so that Christ, our ascended Lord,
may receive all glory, honor, and praise.
Amen.



Day 4: Patience

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”
—Ephesians 4:2

SUNG PRAYER

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Help us to feel your comfort near.
Open our minds, teach us Christ’s ways
So we may bear your fruit today.

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Come Holy Spirit, come.

Fill us with your joy.
Come Holy Spirit, come.

Guard our hearts and minds with your peace.
Come Holy Spirit, come.

Instil in us patience.
Come Holy Spirit, come.

Speak to us through your Word.
Come Holy Spirit, come.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Ephesians 4:1-16

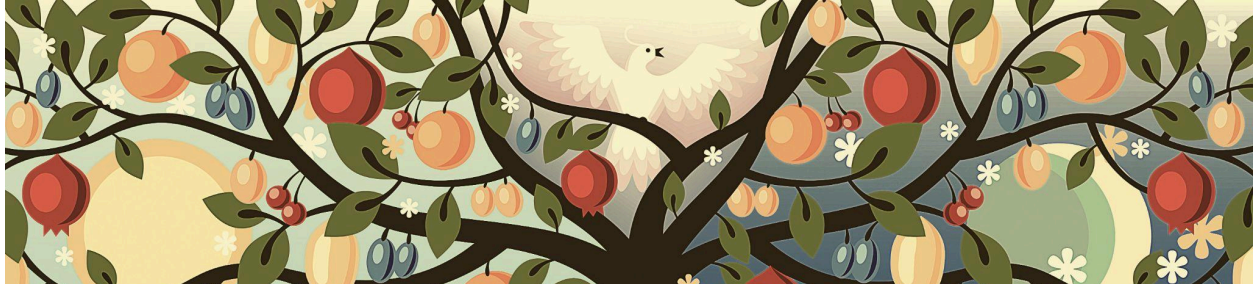
REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

Scripture and the world in general provides little specific advice on *how* to be patient, but this passage does suggest some related characteristics and actions.

- How do you think being humble and gentle might connect with being patient (v. 2)? What are some ways you might better show humility and gentleness?
- How might “bearing with one another in love” (v. 2) be an expression of patience?
- Take time to note all the fruit of the Spirit that are mentioned in this passage. How might fruit of the Spirit be related to the connecting tissue that holds the body, the church, together?
- Where might God be asking you to practice patience a little more and how might a posture of humility, gentleness, and/or love help you do that? Be intentional in practicing patience over the next day.

CLOSING PRAYER

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 feet that go wherever the Spirit may direct,
 and hands to join the Spirit's work in this world,
so that Christ, our ascended Lord,
may receive all glory, honor, and praise.
Amen.



Day 5: Kindness

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” —Ephesians 4:32

SUNG PRAYER

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Come Holy Spirit, come.

Guard our hearts and minds with your peace.
Come Holy Spirit, come.

Instil in us patience.
Come Holy Spirit, come.

Help us to learn to be kind to all.
Come Holy Spirit, come.

Speak to us through your Word.
Come Holy Spirit, come.
Amen.

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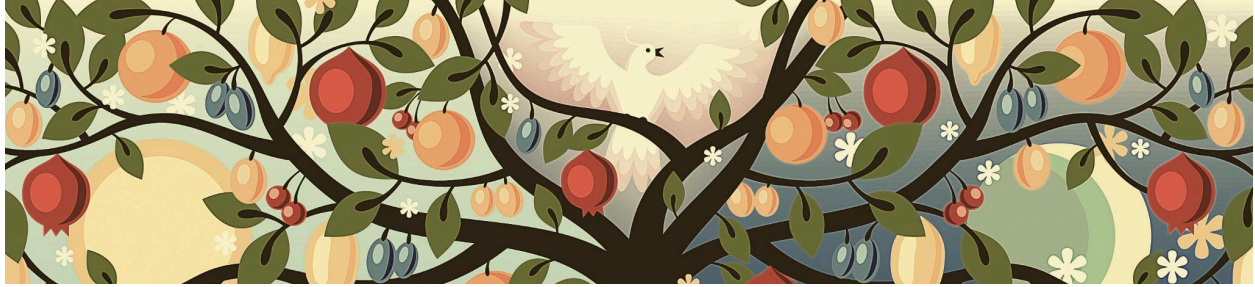
Ephesians 4:17-32

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

- Have you witnessed someone being kind recently? Did it have any impact on you? If there are other people with you right now, share your stories of both what you saw and how it impacted you as a witness.
- Have you witnessed someone being unkind recently? How did that affect you? If there are other people with you right now, share your stories of both what you saw and how it impacted you as a witness.
- In vs. 32 of today's reading being kind, compassionate, and forgiving are all mentioned together, why do you think that is?
- Spend some time reflecting on the difference God's forgiveness has made or could make on your life. I wonder how that forgiveness might make a difference in how we live and the choices we make?
- Are there default reactions or habits that you need the Holy Spirit's help to change in order that you might be more kind?
- What is one act of kindness you could do today?
- How might you make kindness a habit?

CLOSING PRAYER

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Amen.



Day 6: Goodness

“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” —Matthew 5:16

SUNG PRAYER

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Guard our hearts and minds with your peace.
Come Holy Spirit, come.

Instil in us patience.
Come Holy Spirit, come.

Help us to learn to be kind to all.
Come Holy Spirit, come.

May you be glorified through our goodness.
Come Holy Spirit, come.

Speak to us through your Word.
Come Holy Spirit, come. Amen

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 5:1-16

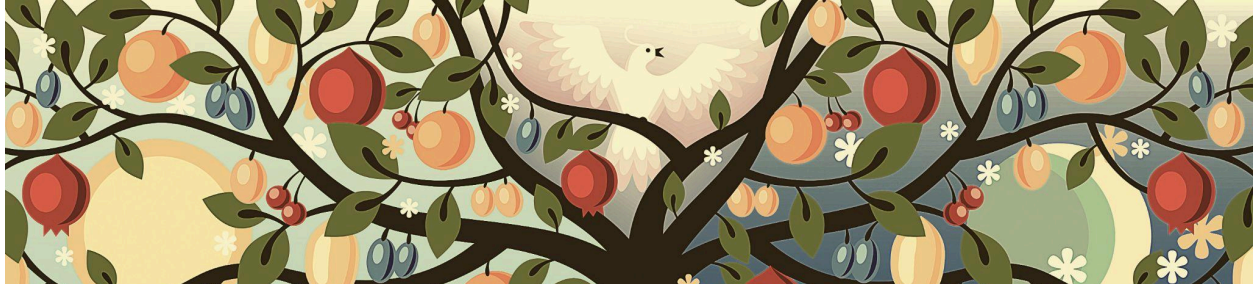
REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

Goodness leads to good deeds. You cannot be filled with goodness and not perform good deeds. Goodness is also about a way of being, a way of looking at and interacting with the world around you. We often disconnect the passage about Salt and Light from the Beatitudes that are found directly before it; yet what good deeds is being talked about in vs. 16 if not those detailed in the Beatitudes.

- Read through the Beatitudes one at a time and spend a moment reflecting on how goodness or good deeds might intersect with each one. Maybe it is helpful for you to imagine yourself in each scenario and ask yourself how you might express goodness if that was you today. If there are others with you share your thoughts with each other.
- How does it feel to know that your actions show others what it means to be a follower of God? Does knowing that inspire you to do good deeds?
- What might it look like in our culture to do good deeds with the glory given to God rather than you?
- Spend a few minutes asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you how you might grow in goodness. What good deeds are you called to do? How might you do them so that God receives the glory?

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and hands to join the Spirit's work in this world,
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Amen.



Day 7: Faithfulness

“Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.” —Luke 8:48

SUNG PRAYER

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Replace our fear with faith,
Come Holy Spirit, come.

Speak to us through your Word.
Come Holy Spirit, come. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 8:22-25, 40-56

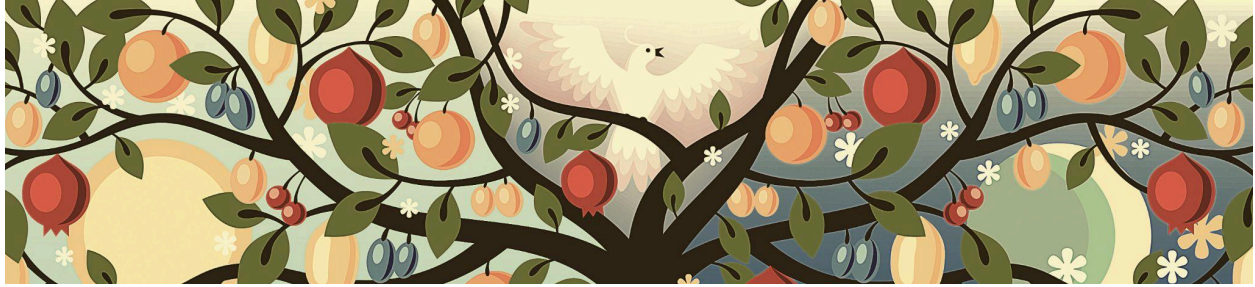
REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

Though our English translations use the word “faithfulness” in the list of the fruit of the Spirit, the original word is usually translated simply as faith. It isn’t so much about being dedicated to something which focuses on our actions as much as about faith which Christ gives freely.

- In the first part of the reading Jesus asks the disciples “Where is your faith?” (v. 25). In the second story Jesus says to the woman, “your faith has healed you” and to Jairus “Don’t be afraid; just believe” (v. 50). In the Greek “believe” has the same root as “faith” and Jesus’ statement to Jairus could be translated “Don’t be afraid; have faith in me”. Which person/group in these two stories do you most identify with and why?
- Have you ever been in great danger? If Jesus had asked you at that time “Where is your faith” what would you have said?
- Scripture talks of how faith is a gift from God, it isn’t something that we can work to achieve. Why do you think that it was the woman who was given faith and not the disciples, Christ’s closest friends, or Jairus, a synagogue leader?
- How do you think faith is like or unlike the other fruit of the Spirit?
- While faith is a gift the more it is used, the more we rest in it, the stronger it gets. What are some ways that you can exercise your faith muscle?

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Amen.



Day 8: Gentleness

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” –Colossians 3:12

SUNG PRAYER

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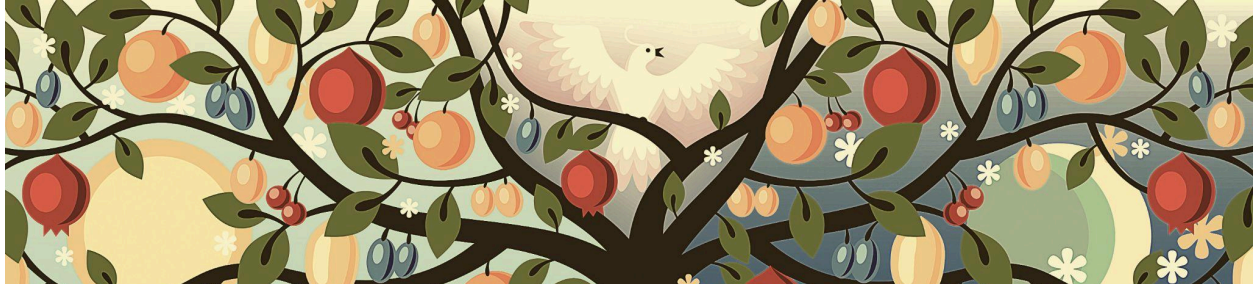
Colossians 3:12-17

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

- How many fruit of the Spirit are you able to find in this passage? Why do you think so many fruit are mentioned together?
- Can you recall any stories from scripture or from your own life that exemplify gentleness?
- Why do you think gentleness is listed as a fruit of the spirit?
- What might you do to become more gentle?

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Amen.



Day 9: Self-Control

“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, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.”
—2 Peter 1:5-7

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Clothe us with gentleness,
Come Holy Spirit, come.

Increase our self-control,
Come Holy Spirit, come.

Speak to us through your Word.
Come Holy Spirit, come.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

2 Peter 1:3-11

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

This passage provides a good conclusion to this devotional series in that it reminds us that through the Holy Spirit we do have everything we need to live godly lives, lives that are marked by the fruit of the Spirit, if we make an effort to live in step with the Spirit. If we do this we are promised a “rich welcome into the eternal kingdom”.

- The final fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5 is self-control. Do you think Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, had a particular reason for naming this fruit last?
- Do you ever struggle with self-control? Spend some time asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you where you might need to grow and how you might do so.
- Read through the list of the fruit of the Spirit again (Galatians 3:22-23). Which fruit do you find it most challenging to bear? Which fruit do you want to grow in? Spend time in prayer asking the Spirit to work in and through you so that that fruit may grow as well as reveal ways in which you can strengthen your practices.

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 feet that go wherever the Spirit may direct,
 and hands to join the Spirit's work in this world,
so that Christ, our ascended Lord,
may receive all glory, honor, and praise.
Amen.