

Living the Life of Christ

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March 2020, March 2026

Part 1: What is the Christ Life?

Time and again, the Scriptures call on believers to be like Christ. This theme appears frequently in the New Testament in various forms and terms, so much so that you'll be amazed at how often and in how many ways it is described. All of these point to the fact that we are called to live like Christ. If that is the command, then we must first understand exactly what the "Christ-life" entails. What does it look like?

We find our answer in Galatians 5:22-23, which provides a fairly complete picture of the lifestyle Jesus demonstrated during his 33 years on Earth. Paul refers to this lifestyle as "the fruit of the Spirit." We will explore how this "fruit" works in the next session. For now, our focus is on understanding what exactly it is. We will concentrate on verses 22 and 23, which define the Christ Life.

Galatians 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control;** against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.
(Emphasis added)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Each of these nine attributes describes how Jesus interacted with others and how He lived His life. This is the clearest and most concise summary of the Christ Life. This list perfectly illustrates His character and His relationships with others. Verse 16 calls this “walking in the Spirit,” which we will explore in the next session. For now, all you need to know is that the source is the indwelling Holy Spirit – Fruit **of** the Spirit.

Note that in the original Greek, “fruit” is singular rather than plural, with a list of nine elements following. This is because the nine “fruit” are a package deal—a nine-part unit—meaning it is all or none. Details on that in the next session. For now, file it into memory.

Let’s take a look at this fruit package.

- The first three “fruit” (love, joy, peace) are *internal* expressions from God directed toward the believer. The believer experiences love, joy, and peace within himself.
- The second three (patience, kindness, goodness) are *outward* expressions toward the world, demonstrating love, joy, and peace projected by the believer onto the surrounding world.
- The last three (faithfulness, goodness, and self-control) are *upward* expressions toward God. The believer shows faithfulness, goodness, and self-control to the source, God.

The first triad examines our inner selves – our personal experiences.

Love

Two Greek words are often used in the New Testament and translated as “love.” As one might expect, they mean two different things. One is *phileo*, used to describe the love for someone or something because of the attractiveness of the object of that love. We love (*phileo*) them because there is something about them that we find attractive. That may be something as shallow as their physical attractiveness, or they may simply be fun people we enjoy being around. The idea is that of “brotherly love.” The name of the city, Philadelphia, comes from this Greek word. Its motto is “the city of brotherly love.”

The other word we see translated as “love” is *agape*, and it is used in a more inwardly focused sense rather than emphasizing the outward attractiveness of the object of that love. It is often described as “impersonal love” and is much more powerful than *phileo*. It refers to loving someone not because of how lovable they are, but because of the personal integrity of the **one demonstrating** the love.

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

We see *agape* used here both as a commandment from God and as the love God feels for His creation. It is an impersonal love because it doesn't depend on how “lovely” the one being loved is. In fact, we are quite unlovable in our fallen state.

Ephesians 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ

With nothing remotely lovable in us, God loved us even before He saved us. That is *agape* love. That is love rooted in the integrity and righteousness of the one doing the loving. That is divine love.

Romans 5:8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 8:38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

In John 11:1-44, we see a picture of Christ's love demonstrated by His actions. When His friend Lazarus was dying, Jesus was summoned, but He intentionally delayed going to him. He wanted to make a point. Meanwhile, Lazarus died and was in the tomb for four days before Jesus arrived. Since the Jews believed the soul remained around for three days after death, Jesus waited four days to confirm that Lazarus was truly dead.

By then, the body was beginning to smell, also proving death. All this served as undeniable proof that Jesus could raise Lazarus from the dead. Of course, Jesus knew all along that He would bring His friend back to life. But notice how Jesus responds when He sees the grief of Mary and Lazarus' friends.

John 11:33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, **he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.** ³⁴ And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ **Jesus wept.** (Emphasis added.)

He was moved to tears, but why? He knew he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. There was no reason for sadness in His heart. However, in His identification with His fellow mankind and their grief, His love for them was so great that He was moved to weep for their grief. This is *agape*.

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.
² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Here we see a display of Christ's love: He sacrificed His life and took on our sins to enable us to fellowship with Him.

Some other passages expressing *agape* love:

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

Romans 13:8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is

not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.
² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

Agape love is not based on the qualities of the object of love but rather on the character of the one doing the loving. It is the kind of love we see in John 3:16 (and other passages above): “For God so **loved** the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” God does not love us because we are such wonderful people. We aren’t! He loves us despite all our failures, weaknesses, and sinfulness with a love that is infinitely greater than human (*phileo*) love. As we will see later, He wants to give us that love so we can reflect it in our lives, just as He demonstrates it.

Let’s examine the next two divine attributes that the believer is called to demonstrate. Remember, the first three focus inwardly, the second three focus outwardly, and the last three are directed upward toward God.

Joy

The Greek word is *chara*, usually translated as “rejoice” or “joy.” It means to be joyful or glad, but it does not refer to the superficial giddiness often associated with the word joy. Instead, it denotes the anticipation of a future experience that is felt as joy in the present. However, it is not just a preliminary joy, which means an action or event that occurs before or

prepares for something fuller or more significant later. *Chara* is a deep, lasting inner rejoicing promised to those who abide in Christ.

John 15:10 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.
11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

This joy isn't dependent on circumstances because it rests in God's sovereign control over all things.

Luke 6:20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:
"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
21 "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.
"Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.
22 "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven ...

Jesus tells us to remain joyful in the face of adversity, because it will lead to rewards in Heaven if we meet it with joy. It conveys a present celebration in anticipation of future rewards in Heaven at the Bema.

In Luke 10:21, Jesus "rejoiced in the Holy Spirit" because, in His humanity, He saw a victory over Satan.

Luke 10:18 "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."

Luke 10:19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. 20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

He tells His disciples not to rejoice in the power they've been given, but rather "rejoice that your names are written in heaven." He wants them to focus not on earthly victories but on the ultimate victory in eternity.

James uses *chara* the same way.

James 1:2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James similarly emphasizes that our joy should not be centered on present victories but on the future rewards of successfully passing the test of our faith – that we “may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” While present victories in testing are beneficial and strengthen our faith as believers, the ultimate aim is to make us “complete,” meaning mature, fully functional believers.

Hebrews 12:2 ...Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus felt joy on the Cross because He knew the final outcome would be His being “seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” The future results made the present situation “*chara*.”

At Antioch, the apostles had a successful witness.

Acts 13:48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Their joy was for those who came to the Lord and their future in eternity.

Peace

Peace (*eirēnē*) is an inner calm and quietness, even in the midst of difficult circumstances, and it defies human understanding. Based on the Old Testament and Rabbinic usage, *eirēnē* takes on a deep and broad significance. It points to the eschatological salvation of the entire person, which is already being brought about by God's power. It signifies the state of ultimate fulfillment. In a sense, it involves resting confidently in the reality of our salvation, both positionally and experientially. In the case of

Jesus, He was resting confidently in two truths: who He is and that God the Father is fully in control. No matter the circumstances we face, we should have inward joy and peace, along with the same love Jesus felt for others. That may seem difficult, and it is if you rely solely on human effort. It is achieved only through faith in God and all the promises He has made to His followers. Some call it “faith-resting,” resting in our security as believers. Regardless of the situation, a believer should not be anxious or depressed.

Philippians 4:7 the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

As Christians, we should be the ones others turn to during a crisis when they are panicking. We have peace because we know who is in charge and that He has a plan for us in any situation we face.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

John 16:33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

Romans 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

The Second Triad

The second triad of virtues is patience, kindness, and goodness. While the first triad centered on internal qualities, encouraging the believer to love

others as themselves, rejoice in our future, and enjoy the peace of God, the middle triad should be seen as outwardly focused on others. We are to be patient, kind, and righteous.

Patience

Patience is the complete and unmatched readiness of generous and forgiving grace. Patience (*makrothymia*) is the quality of showing forbearance in the face of provocation. It holds no thoughts of revenge, even when treated unjustly. Sometimes called “long-suffering,” all of us have experienced God’s patience combined with His mercy (kindness) in not striking us with a divine bolt of lightning for our many sinful failures, not to mention disrespect towards His Person. As much as we might want to slap some offending idiot silly, we are called not to be “strikers” of others. Instead, we are called to show patience toward that person.

Matthew 5:38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

This patience mirrors the patience Jesus showed toward many who wished him harm and constantly tried to expose him as a fraud. Clearly, he had the power to destroy his enemies instantly, but he chose patience instead. “Forgive them...” He said from the Cross.

Colossians 1:9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ **being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy;** ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. (Emphasis added)

Here, we observe several of the nine Fruit of the Spirit in a call for Christ-like behavior by a Christian. In the Colossians passage below, this is echoed in the call to “put on ... compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and **patience**,” and then, in verse 15, “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” These attributes are not usually associated with fallen man but are linked to Christ and the way He lived.

Colossians 3:12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and **patience**,¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Emphasis added)

1 Timothy 1:15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, **that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience** as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. (Emphasis added)

The patience we are asked to show is not ours; it is Christ's patience living within us.

Kindness

Kindness goes hand in hand with patience. God's love, shown through Christ, manifests itself as kindness toward others. Kindness (*chrēstotēs*) is benevolence in action, as God demonstrated toward people. It comes from the verb *charizomai*, meaning to give freely or graciously as a favor. We can also view kindness as mercy—not giving others what they deserve, but instead giving them what they don't deserve.

Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Kindness, together with patience, is viewed as a sign of demonstrated divine love (*agape*).

1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth

2 Corinthians 6:4 as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love;

As children of God, we show that relationship through our behavior, specifically in how we are to respond to ill-treatment — “by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love.” We are to be Christ-like.

Colossians 3:12 Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Goodness

The word is *agathōsynē*, which means moral excellence in the content of one’s life. It refers to a good of intrinsic value, a goodness that can be understood as both the uprightness of the soul and an action of reaching out to others to do good, even when it is not deserved.

Romans describes this divine goodness as God's work in the life of a faith-filled believer.

Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for **good**, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Emphasis added)

We were created to produce this divine “goodness.”

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

It originates from God as part of the Fruit of the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work

That divine goodness is later rewarded at the Bema judgment.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether **good** or evil. (Emphasis added)

The last three virtues of the Fruit of the Spirit are directed upward toward God.

Faithfulness

The Greek word is *pistis*, and it means faith as a person's relation and attitude toward God. According to the Old Testament, faith is always a person's response to God's primary action. But it is faith that leads to obedience – faith in action. Faithfulness is the quality that makes a person trustworthy or reliable.

Galatians 2:19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Ephesians 3:16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Faith is the key to the Fruit of the Spirit. It is directed toward God, but it begins with Him. We have a trusting relationship with Him that enables the Holy Spirit's power. Through faith, we "live," meaning our spiritual lives are vibrant and productive.

Gentleness

The Greek word is *prautes*, and in Greek culture it denoted "mild and gentle friendliness," a highly valued social virtue. In Old Testament usage, the word is sometimes linked to a servant's attitude and is translated as "meekness." In New Testament usage, it can sometimes be mistaken for weakness because it is an act that lacks arrogance, impatience, anger, or violence, but that would be wrong. More accurately, it should be seen as an act carried out with patient restraint.

Galatians 6:1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of **gentleness**. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and **gentleness**, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Colossians 3:12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, **meekness**, and patience

2 Timothy 2:24 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ²⁵ correcting his opponents with **gentleness**.

1 Peter 3:15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with **gentleness** and respect,

Self-control

The Greek word *enkrateia* means having control over oneself or over something, and can include endurance or steadfastness. In the New Testament, it usually carries a sexual connotation related to restraint from

acts of sexual immorality. This noun is used in the New Testament only in our Galatians 5:23 passage and in Acts.

Acts 24:24 After some days, Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵ And as he reasoned about righteousness and **self-control** and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, “Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity, I will summon you.” (Emphasis added)

Felix, the Roman procurator of Judea, was convicted. According to the historian Josephus, Felix was captivated by Drusilla’s beauty and used a magician, Simon, to persuade her to marry him, even though she was already married.

2 Peter 1:3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with **self-control**, and **self-control** with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Such a quality is impossible to attain apart from the power of God’s Spirit in the believer.

Conclusions

We have explored the Fruit of the Spirit, which is described in Scripture as consisting of nine elements. The word “fruit” in this context is singular, suggesting that it is a single unit that includes all nine parts or none of them.

In the next session, we will examine how these are experienced by the believer.