

St. Matthew AME Church
Orange, N.J.
Rev. Melvin E. Wilson, Pastor/Teacher

May 8, 2021

Women's Bible Study Fellowship
Spring 2021 Series: "The Divine Nine"

"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. Galatians 5:22-23

Session II: "Don't Get It Twisted"

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

I. Review of Session I. - "The Divine Source"

- The Holy Spirit is the very presence of God within us and all believers, helping us live as God wants and building Christ's church on earth. John 14:15-17, John 15:26
- God is presented in the form of three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
- The authors of both the Old and the New Testaments saw no problem with interchanging God and the Holy Spirit. To speak of one was to speak of the other. Genesis 1:1-3, Acts 5:1-4

What Does The Holy Spirit Look Like?

Believers who truly walk in the Spirit:

- They radiate integrity
- There is nothing plastic about them
- They don't intimidate, bully or menace people
- They seem to be at peace with who they are. And, they seem almost anxious to accept you for who you are.
- They are people you can trust.

The Holy Spirit takes up residency in believers forever. He doesn't just pass through. He makes His home in us. He comes to stay.

II. "The Change Agent"

- The work of the Holy Spirit is to change human nature into God-like nature. That is a job for the Holy Spirit, because our flesh wars against the Spirit.
- Our flesh does not want to change. Romans 7:14-25
- The work of the Holy Spirit is to work through us to manifest the presence of God in the world.
- When our own wills are centered in the flesh, we block the Holy Spirit from coming through in our lives. Therefore, people cannot see Jesus in us because we are blocking Him out by our selfish motives and our fleshly activities. When we have our way, we are blocking Jesus out. People see you and not Jesus.
- It is only through God's grace and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that we are able to manifest to the world the fruit of the Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit's power cannot be harnessed (controlled). His power cannot be used to accomplish anything other than the Father's will. The Holy Spirit is not a genie waiting for someone to rub his lamp the right way. The Holy Spirit is Our Holy God.
- We cannot force the Holy Spirit's hand-not with faith, nor with prayer, not with anything. He is God! We would do well to stop trying to harness power and, instead, focus on allowing His power to harness us.
- The power of the Holy Spirit is manifested in a believer's life through two channels: the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. Corinthians 12:1-11, Galatians 5:22-23
 - There is an often-overlooked relationship between the power of God and the fruit of the Spirit.
 - One reason this relationship is overlooked involves the confusion surrounding the Holy Spirit's power. When we think of power, we are prone to think of the spectacle and miracles. Some folk are caught up in seeking

these things. But the purpose behind the Holy Spirit's power being made available to humankind was not a spectacle. Neither was it the performing of miracles for miracles' sake.

- His power was given for the express purpose of enabling believers to be more effective witnesses. If that means healing someone, He can handle that. If that means enabling someone to clearly preach the gospel, He can do that as well. But neither is any more or less a demonstration of His power.
- We must not allow ourselves to get caught up in pursuing the more spectacular demonstrations of the Holy Spirit's power.

III. "Don't Get It Twisted "-John15:1-5

- Jesus makes a clear distinction between the vine and the branch. The two are not the same. He is the vine, we are the branches. The two are joined, but not one.
- The common denominator in nature is the sap. The sap is the life of the vine and its branches. Cut off the flow of sap to the branch and it slowly withers and dies. As the branch draws its life from the vine, so we draw life from Christ. To abide in Christ is to draw upon His life. His life is made available through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
- We are not equipped to produce change, only bear it. You are simply the vehicle through which it is expressed, as a branch is the vehicle through which the fruit-producing life of the vine is expressed. **YOU ARE A BEARER, NOT A PRODUCER!** Branches are totally dependent on the vine for fruit and we are totally dependent on the Holy Spirit.
- Christ is the vine and God is the gardener who cares for the branches to make them fruitful. The branches are all who claim to be followers of Christ.
- Fruitful branches are cut back to promote growth. In other words, God must sometimes discipline us to strengthen our character and faith.
- But branches that don't bear fruit are cut off at the trunk, because not only are they worthless, but they often infect the rest of the tree. People who won't bear fruit for God or who try to block the efforts of God's followers will be cut off from His life giving power.
- The sign of a Spirit-filled believer is fruit, not a particular experience, or a particular gift. Matthew 7:15-20

IV. "The Power of the Fruit"

- The virtues embodied in the fruit of the Spirit are all relational in nature. The presence of these characteristics makes a person more attractive, pleasant to be around, and a joy to work with and for. They make for better customer relations, better everything. You cannot lose by walking in the Spirit.
- The best picture of what a Spirit-filled person looks like is Christ. His life was characterized by the fruit of the Spirit, and so in the midst of a world characterized by just the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit: Galatians 5:19-21
 - Christ was certainly no wimp. He stood up to His detractors, when it was appropriate.
 - Christ knew when to keep silent as well.
 - He was a secure man. There was nothing intimidating about Him.
 - He spoke with authority.
 - At the end of His life, He tackled the toughest account of all- death. And He won!
- This same Jesus, who lived such a remarkable life, has asked God to send His Spirit to dwell in you. His goal is to reproduce Himself in you.
- Whenever and wherever fruit is being produced, God's power is manifested.
- The fruit of the Spirit is the most effective evangelistic tool we have.
- A second way in which the fruit of the Spirit serves as a channel for the Holy Spirit's power: the fruit of the Spirit provides the relational qualities necessary to enable members of the body of Christ to work together successfully. The body of Christ is one big bundle of relationships. It is made up of all sorts of people who are expected to work together to accomplish the purposes of God. For this to take place there must be fruit.
- When believers who are not walking in the Spirit come together to carry on the work of the church, there will be a breakdown. On the other hand, when a group of Spirit-filled believers get together, there is a supernatural dynamic. Hallelujah!

**Last Session for this Series: "Tell It Like It Is"
Saturday, June 12, 2021**