

CREW Bible Study

Youth XP3 Message Series – FREE PEOPLE – Week 5

FREE TO BE BETTER

- **BOTTOM LINE:** Free people stay close to the source of their freedom.
- **GOAL:** To help students discover that lasting change happens when they stay close to God.
- **SCRIPTURE:**
 - *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*
 - *"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing." – John 15:5*

MESSAGE

Have you ever been in the car with an impatient driver? Do you have your license now and are *you* an impatient driver? Yes or no, you've probably experienced this at some point. It's honestly pretty hard *not* to be impatient when you're driving. You're in your car on the way to somewhere. You have places to be and things to do. You don't have time to sit in traffic, or behind someone going 10 miles *under* the speed limit. You need the car ahead of you to move out of your way *now*.

Or maybe you've been on the receiving end of an impatient driver. The light turns green and the car behind you honks in like 0.2 seconds. Is that really necessary? Find a little patience! Right?

But on the flip side, isn't it great when someone is surprisingly patient with you? If you make a mistake, and someone patiently gives you time to fix it. Or when it's taking you extra time to get ready in the morning and someone holds back from rushing you. Or someone has the patience to let you finish whatever it is you are doing before doing something else with them or for them.

That's nice, isn't it? We all love it when we're on the receiving end of grace like that. But here's a tough question: Have you ever tried to BE that kind of person? Have you ever tried to BE that patient? It's difficult!

Maybe you've tried. Maybe you put on your patient face, but after a while – maybe even in just a few seconds – it faded. And maybe you decided that it's just too difficult to be patient. Maybe you decided that it's just not in your personality. You are you and you're just an impatient person. People will have to live with that.

But what if this wasn't just about you *trying* harder? That's what we're talking about today as we wrap up this series called "Free People."

For the past several weeks, we've been talking about the letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to the early followers of Jesus in an area called Galatia, which is modern-day Turkey. Paul would travel around from place to place to tell people about who Jesus was and what He did. Paul shared messages about Jesus with all sorts of people:

- People who worshipped other gods.
- People who grew up in the Jewish religion who thought all the Jewish laws should still apply to their current relationship with God.
- People who were completely confused on what to believe.

And in the part of Paul's letter that we're going to look at today, Paul broke it down into one simple illustration that people in that culture could understand – and we can today too: Fruit.

A couple of weeks ago, we talked about how you harvest what you plant. Paul used examples like this because people in that culture and time were very familiar with farming and agriculture. They didn't just drive down to the grocery store and pick up whatever they needed to make dinner. Or have Amazon deliver it. They planted seeds and waited for the harvest to have what they needed. So, Paul gave them an analogy related to fruit because he knew they would relate.

Let's go back to elementary school Science class for a second, where you learned about how plants work. Specifically, how fruit grows. Fruit is simply the sweet tasting (or sometimes sour!) part of a plant. In many cases, "fruit" is simply the result of something else. People don't plant oranges or strawberries. They plant orange trees and strawberry plants and then hope that the weather cooperates in order for them to harvest oranges and strawberries.

So, you may be wondering right now what our relationship with God - what *your* relationship with God - has to do with fruit? Well, keep this idea in mind as we read what Paul wrote in his letter to the Galatians.

Hear these words in Galatians chapter 5, verses 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.

When Paul refers to "the Spirit," he's basically referring to God. He's saying that you have access to this whole list of great qualities and characteristics of God right now. You have access right now because Jesus, through His life and death, removed any barrier between you and God.

Because of Jesus' life and death, we all have the ability – you have the ability - at any moment, any time, any place, any situation to be close to God and to have these characteristics and qualities of God. Do you think you don't have patience, or self-control? You do. It's there. It just needs to grow.

Now, let's go back to our science lesson about plants. Here's what we know:

- Fruit doesn't produce itself.
- Fruit doesn't strain harder or try harder to become that fruit, the delicious part of its plant.
- Fruit is the RESULT of something else.

Now, if an orange is the result of the orange tree, if it is the result of what the orange tree produces, then how does that relate to your relationship with God? In your relationship with God, God is the tree. Kindness is the fruit from that tree. Joy is the fruit. Patience is the fruit.

So, while Paul understood that the Galatians loved being around people who demonstrated qualities like joy, kindness, and patience, he wasn't telling them to work more and try harder to be this way. He was telling them that these qualities are the result of something else. These qualities are planted in you already, but the fruit of them comes as a result of being close to God, by spending more and more time with Him in worship and in prayer. If you are close to God then you will produce fruit that reflects who God is, fruit from His tree.

And this lines up directly to what Jesus said when He walked on Earth and talked to people Himself. Listen to what Jesus said in John chapter 15, verse 5:

"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."

Jesus is saying right here that if you want to be more kind, or more joyful, or more patient, then stay connected to the source of these things. Stay connected to God.

Even though Paul himself had grown up thinking that God was all about control and rules, that all changed when he met Jesus. Jesus helped him realize that God is loving, joyful, kind and patient. God is NOT distant, angry, mean, and unforgiving. And if you want more fruit – the fruit of being loving, joyful, kind, forgiving, and patient – then stay close to God who will produce it in you.

Here's a few things to think about.....

1. **If you want something, you've got to go to the source to get it.** If you want oranges, then you need to find an orange tree. If you want strawberries, go find a strawberry patch. If you want more qualities like kindness, joy, faithfulness, patience and self-control, then stay as close as possible to God who is the source of these things. When you hang around anyone long enough, over time you are affected by them. You'll start sounding like them. You become more like them. You reflect who they are. Spend more time with God, and you'll become more like Him.
2. **God has an abundance. He will give you what you need.** Remember the COVID toilet paper hoarding that went on when this pandemic first hit? People knew they needed it and they wanted an abundance of it. Wherever the source was to get toilet paper, people were there to stock up. Which of these qualities that we've been talking about today do you need most? God is the source for you to get more of it. He has an endless supply and He will give you an abundance. Go to Him as your source.

Don't miss this: Your free will allows you to think, say and do what you want. Staying close to God in worship and in prayer helps you think out of love, it helps you speak with kindness, and act with patience and self-control

. Staying close to God allows you to use your free will for good. And that helps you be the kind of person you want to be.

FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Can you think of a time when you completely lost your patience with someone? Or, a time when someone completely lost patience with you? What happened?
2. Describe a time when someone was so nice or so patient with you that it actually caught you off guard.
3. When are you most likely to lose your patience? Is it a person, place or thing? Describe the situation.
4. Have you ever tried to be the "bigger person" in an argument? What happened?
5. Describe a time when the characteristics of someone you hung around with started to rub off on you and you started to become more like them. Was it for better or for worse?
6. Read Galatians 5:22-23. Which of the fruits of the Spirit is easiest for you to live out? Which is hardest for you?
7. Describe a time when someone told you that you needed to try harder to be more kind, more patient, or have more self-control. How did that make you

feel? Were you able to develop more of these qualities? If so, how did you do it?

8. God is the source for all of the fruits of the Spirit. If we want these fruits in our lives, we need to stay close to God as the source. How do you stay close to God? How can you stay closer this week?