

How to Know if You Are Being Led by Jesus or the World

By Jeff Stringer

The daily grind of life has the tendency to bend us to its ebb and flow. Combine this with the personal issues that we all face, and our human desires, and it is easy for any of us to wander away from God. Everyone needs help staying on track with God's will. Fortunately, our awesome God gives us both a playbook and a checklist to determine if we are following God or following the world and our fleshly desires. Every once in a while, (everyday would be preferable!) we need to pull out the playbook and the checklist to determine where we are. If the result of this evaluation is not great, then a course correction is needed. Which for most of us is just about all the time. Of course, the playbook is the bible. But what is the checklist?

How to Assess Your Walk with God – Using His Checklist

Are you walking close with the Lord, guided daily by the Holy Spirit, or are you walking through life as you choose? The checklist that God provides to help answer this question are the Fruit(s) of the Holy Spirit. The Fruit of the Holy Spirit is a phrase that sums up nine attributes of someone that is living in accordance with the Holy Spirit. These attributes were introduced to us by the apostle Paul in Galatians 5:22-23.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

These attributes are called Fruit because they grow from the Holy Spirit, they are not manufactured by us. Therefore, the only way to express them consistently is by accepting the leading of God in our lives. The Holy Spirit is God in us, directing our thoughts that result in the Fruit. They are a list of qualities that should be recognizable in us IF we are living according to God's will, IF we are being guided by the Holy Spirit.

Fruit of the Holy Spirit¹

The Inward Traits

Love – Listed first, possibly because it drives many of the other fruits. This love is deep, coming from a trust, that allows us to reach out to others in a way we are normally incapable of. In its purest sense, which we will never achieve, it is what God feels for us as his creation.

Joy – Not the happy feeling we get from something nice that happens to us. But an inner feeling that goes beyond what the world offers.

Peace – Human peace always comes with the feeling that it might fade or be ripped away. God's peace stays with us even when the world around is in chaos, it transcends the world.

Outward Traits

Longsuffering - This is patience, exhibited in dealing with the world and most importantly with the people around us. Often waiting for God to work in an area, instead of forging ahead with our own agenda and timeline.



Kindness – in the face of those that do not show kindness to us. Jesus never broke anyone. He stood His ground when needed, recognizing right from wrong, and was straight-forward when he taught. But was always kind to all those that He came across. Kindness is an outward trait that others can easily see in us, or not!

Goodness – Occurs not just sporadically, but in everything we do. Good is also relative, even Jesus said “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.” (Luke 18:19). That is a pretty high bar to hit and of course we can not be as good as God. But it also tells us that goodness comes from God and the closer we walk with the Spirit the easier goodness flows from us.

Faithfulness – Faith is God’s gift, but it also a fruit. Faith is trust, trust in God. A person of faith is not only a person who trusts but a person who can be trusted. Someone that keeps his word, pays his debts, meets his obligations.

Gentleness – is a true mark of a man, counter to what society thinks. It is not weakness. It is humility, someone that is strong enough inside to show gentleness to the world.

Self-Control – certainly comes from exercising the other fruits. It is calmness in the face of adversity. If you lose your self-control you are letting the world dictate your actions. Why would you let that happen? God certainly should be in control, the Holy Spirit helping you keep control of the self.

How to Assess Yourself and Your Walk with God

None of us would be shaken by the fact that those around us would say that we fail to fully express these attributes. The reason is that these attributes are an expression of the strength of our spiritual walk with God. This is a work in progress called sanctification that we need to constantly work on, until we pass from this earth. However, the great news is that God knows this and asks that we do our best to worship Him and walk as closely with Him as we can. The closer the walk, the more we will manifest the Fruit of the Spirit. The more we manifest the Fruit the farther we move away from living in sin as the two are incompatible (Gal. 5:16-17).

The key to using the Fruit of the Holy Spirit as a checklist, is not to try and change your outward personality or actions, because these attributes are a by-product of the closeness of your walk with Christ. Correction comes through improving you walk with the Lord, not trying to simply be better. Being able to improve your walk with God, is done by taking to heart the truths of God’s scriptures, following Christ’s example. God gives us the Holy Spirit to allow us to interpret the scriptures correctly and to lead us moment by moment, day by day. From a practical standpoint you must remember that we are imperfect, and always will be. However, God asks us to trust him and live a Holy Spirit filled life, expecting us to make incremental steps improving our walk. As we do people see this reflected through the Fruit that flow from the working of the Spirit in us.

So, every time you “act out”, get outwardly impatient with someone, lose control and become angry, or just act poorly, stop and reflect. What is causing that? The answer will be, that you are not being led by the Holy Spirit. Realize that some people are natural shy or meek, some are open and outgoing, but this has nothing to do with their walk with God. We are all different and have our own personality, but the closer we walk with God and are led the Holy Spirit, the more we are like Jesus, the better of a witness we are for Him. Get closer to God and the Fruit of the Spirit will flow from you. Praise God!

¹ **Source:** Descriptions adapted from R.C. Sproul, The Mystery of the Holy Spirit. Christian Focus Publications and Ligonier Ministries. ISBN 978-1-84550-481-6. 158pp.

² Jeff Stringer is a deacon at Gardenside Baptist Church in Lexington, KY and Director of the Men in the Hood Ministries.

