

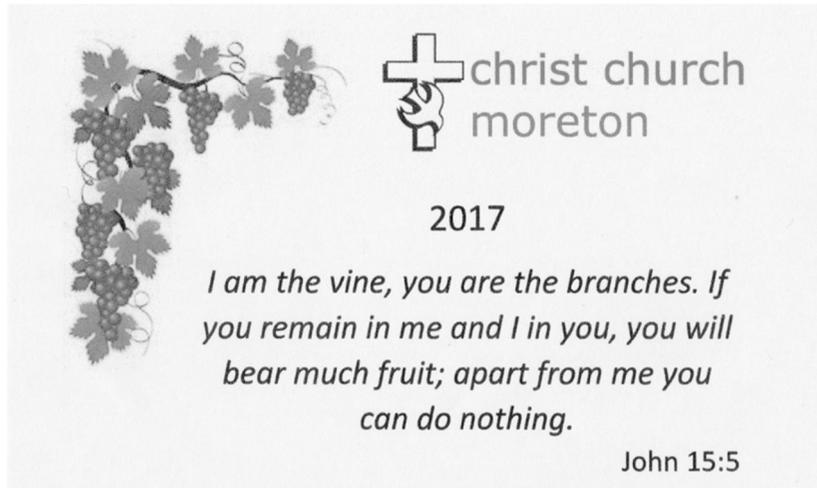
making disciples  
growing disciples  
being disciples

# MORE LIKE JESUS

Christ Church  
Homegroups  
Summer 2017

## HOMEGROUP PROGRAMME for this term

w/b Mon 8 <sup>th</sup> May	Study 1 – Love
w/b Mon 15 <sup>th</sup> May	Study 2 – Joy
w/b Mon 22 <sup>nd</sup> May	Study 3 – Peace
w/b Mon 29 <sup>th</sup> May	Study 4 – Patience
Wednesday 7 <sup>th</sup> June	PRAYER MEETING
w/b Mon 12 <sup>th</sup> June	Study 5 – Kindness
w/b Mon 19 <sup>th</sup> June	Study 6 – Goodness
w/b Mon 26 <sup>th</sup> June	Study 7 – Faithfulness
Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> July	PRAYER MEETING
w/b Mon 10 <sup>th</sup> July	Study 8 – Gentleness
w/b Mon 17 <sup>th</sup> July	Study 9 – Self-control



God's purpose for us is that we should be fruitful. On one level this means that we should be helping others to come to faith in Jesus, and it also means that our lives should increasingly show others what Jesus is like.

In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul writes about the fruit of the Spirit – the way in which the Holy Spirit is at work in us, making us more like Jesus. In this home-group series we are going to look at each element of the fruit. But before we start, a couple of things are important.

First, Paul writes about the fruit, not fruits. The fruit which the Spirit is producing in us involves all nine things on Paul's list. For different ones of us, one aspect of the fruit might come more naturally than another one, but if the Spirit is at work in us, all will be growing.

Second – we can't make the fruit grow ourselves. The purpose of this series is not so that we will work harder at being loving or patient and so on. As we look at each characteristic, it should help us to see how we are growing as disciples, and if

we realise that, for example, we aren't doing too well when it comes to peace, we need to ask the Spirit to produce that fruit in our lives, and we need to think how we can do the things which will encourage the fruit to grow.

And that is why it is important to do these studies as part of a home-group – because it is when we can support, challenge and encourage each other that the ground will be best prepared for the fruit to grow.

In each study there are several passages and questions to look at. Don't feel you need to do all of them, or that you are restricted to them. The aim is that together we will explore how the fruit of the Spirit can go on growing in our lives.

If you want a bit more background and teaching on the subject, I'd recommend <http://www.9aday.org.uk/the-9-fruits>

I'd also encourage all of us to use this prayer, with which John Stott started every day:

*Heavenly Father, I pray that this day I may live in your presence and please you more and more.*

*Lord Jesus, I pray that this day I may take up my cross and follow you.*

*Holy Spirit, I pray that this day you will fill me with yourself and cause your fruit to ripen in my life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

# 1. Love

## WELCOME

What is your favourite fruit?

## WORSHIP

Psalm 103 speaks in many ways of God's love for us. Use the psalm, and then thank God for the ways in which you have experienced his love.

## WORD

The first element of the Fruit of the Spirit which Paul lists is Love. That is hardly surprising – when someone asked Jesus about the greatest commandment in the law, he responded with two, one from Deuteronomy and one from Leviticus:

*Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'*

Matthew 22:37-39,  
quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18

In John's gospel, Jesus told his disciples: *'A new command I give you: Love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'* John 13:34-35.

In other words, our love for each other is the first fruit of discipleship – it is the things which shows that we genuinely are disciples.

But, of course, the word love is used in so many different ways in our society. So – what should this Fruit of the Spirit look like?

- First – why do you think that love is so important?

## Read Galatians 5:13-26

In verses 19-21, Paul lists some of the acts of the sinful nature.

- In what way is each of these a failure to love?

The Fruit of the Spirit gives us a picture of Jesus. Of course, there are many incidents in Jesus' life which show his love, but maybe the best known is with his disciples in the Upper Room just before his death;

## Read John 13:1-17

- In what ways does Jesus show his love for his disciples?
- What does it mean for us to wash one another's feet (v.14)?

## Read 1 John 4:7-16

- Where does love come from?
- How do Jesus' birth and death help us to understand God's love?

- How does God's love motivate you to love others?
- How have you seen God's love demonstrated through other Christians?

### WORK

Think of someone you find it difficult to love – someone who you have to spend time with regularly. Why is it difficult to love that person?

## 2. Joy

### WELCOME

When have you been happiest in 2017 so far?

### WORSHIP

Psalm 100 encourages us to come before the Lord with joy. Use the psalm together.

### WORD

When Jesus was born, the angels announced '*Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.*' Luke 2:10. But 2000 years later, although we live in a society which 'enjoys' a higher standard of living than ever before, joy seems to be one of society's most elusive desires. The rise in drug and alcohol abuse, the escapism of the soaps on TV, the mushrooming of therapies – all witness to the lack of joy in people's lives.

And as Christians we are not immune. We suffer work related stress, we suffer from relationship problems, we suffer from anxiety about finances. Sometimes we get tired, we get depressed, we get drained. Where is the joy the angel spoke of?

- First – how would you define 'joy'?

- Is there a difference between joy as the fruit of the Spirit and ordinary cheerfulness and happiness?
- If so, what makes that difference?

Read Psalm 100 again.

- What reasons does the psalm give for having joy?
- Do these things give you joy?

Read John 15:1-17

In verse 11 Jesus says ‘I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.’

- How does what Jesus says before this lead us to have joy?

Read 1 Peter 1:3-9

- How does the resurrection of Jesus give us joy even if we suffer (v.6)
- How does love for Jesus lead to joy (v.8-9)

### WORK

Psalm 122 begins ‘I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD”’

Being together with God’s people should be a source of joy for us. How can you find joy in our times together, and how can you help others to find joy as we meet?

## 3. Peace

### WELCOME

What is your favourite way of relaxing?

### WORSHIP

Psalm 62 reminds us that ultimately only God can give us peace. Use the together, then thank God for times when you have been particularly aware of his peace.

### WORD

Last time we started with the reminder of the angel announcing that the birth of Jesus would bring joy. And, of course, immediately after that *Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.”* Luke 2:13-14.

And yet that peace often seems in short supply. Stress related illnesses have reached epidemic proportions. In 2011 there were over 45 million prescriptions for anti-depressants in the UK. And Christians aren’t immune – we can suffer from strained relationships, or even abusive ones. We can suffer from high pressure jobs which can drain our peace. And we have to cope with the constant demands of emails, social media etc. Where is this peace we are supposed to enjoy?

### Read John 14:15-27

- What is the relationship between our love and obedience to Jesus and his love and presence in our lives?

*If you love me you will obey what I command.* John 14:15

Once in chapter 13 (v.34), and twice in chapter 15 (v.12, 17) Jesus gives his disciples a command.

- How does obeying this command show that we do love Jesus?

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid* John 14:27.

- How does the peace that Jesus gives differ from the peace offered by the world?
- Have you any experience of the peace that Jesus gives helping you to conquer something of which you were afraid?

### Read Philippians 4:4-9

- What does Paul mean when he says that the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (v.7)?
- What can prevent us experiencing this peace?

Read the following verses:

Romans 12:18,

Ephesians 4:3,

Colossians 3:15

For Paul, seeking peace and living at peace is at the heart of being a gospel community.

- What does it mean to practice peace like that?
- How can we cultivate that fruit of the Spirit in our lives?

### WORK

In what ways do you think that your own life displays peace as the fruit of the Spirit? In what ways and in what circumstances do you need to pray for this to be more true than it is now?

# 4. Patience

## WELCOME

The TV programme 'Room 101' give celebrities a chance to suggest things that they would like to get rid of (put into Room 101) What 3 things would you choose to put into Room 101?

## WORSHIP

Psalm 30 reminds us that God's favour towards us lasts for a lifetime. Use the psalm, then thank God for the ways in which he has been patient with you.

## WORD

The first 3 foundational elements of the fruit of the Spirit are closely linked – in his farewell conversation with his disciples, Jesus brought them together:

**Peace** *I leave with you; my peace I give you* – John 14:27.

*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love* – John 15:9

*I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete* – John 15:11

There is a sense in which love, joy and peace are the foundational fruit, but the things that they lead to are equally important. And next on the list comes patience. The word Paul uses literally means 'long-tempered'. In our NIV Bibles it is translated 'forbearance', but that isn't a word we often use in

everyday conversation. Older translations of the Bible used to translate it as 'long-suffering.' It is to do with how we react to other people who annoy or frustrate us.

## Read Psalm 103

- Although the word 'patience' isn't used here, in what ways is God's patience with his people described?

## Read 1 Peter 2:21-25

- How did Jesus show his patience?
- How is he an example to us?

## Read Colossians 3:12-17

- What does it mean to 'bear with each other' (v.13)?
- Why do we sometimes find it so difficult to do?
- How is this patience related to love and peace, both of which Paul mentions in this passage?

## Read Romans 15:1-13

There is plenty of debate about who 'the weak' and 'the strong' are in this passage. But the key point seems to me to be that within any church there will be very different people, and those difference in themselves should cause division, even though that can easily happen.

- What reason does Paul give for being patient with other Christians (V.5-6)
- When Paul says that we should accept one another, do you think he means we should ignore one another's sins? If not, what does he mean?

### WORK

What situations make you most likely to be impatient with others? At such times, how can you show the fruit of the Spirit in your life in patience?

# 5. Kindness

### WELCOME

Pick 4 people, either alive or dead, who you would invite to a dinner party.

### WORSHIP

Titus 3:4 talks of the kindness and love of God our saviour appearing in Jesus. Praise God for the ways in which he has shown you his kindness and love.

### WORD

After love, joy, peace and patience comes kindness. And again we see that the different elements of the fruit of the Spirit are linked – in his famous chapter on love, Paul wrote; '*love is patient, love is kind.*' (1 Corinthians 13:4) Love should lead us to be more patient with others, and to be kind to them.

Kindness means being willing to do something that helps someone else even if it might be inconvenient to me. Chris Wright says: "Kindness goes beyond duty – it means doing something you don't have to do, but just choose to do. ... Real kindness usually costs something and doesn't expect any reward." In the Bible, kindness is often linked with generosity – in fact the word Paul uses often had that sense – generously providing for another person's needs.

- First – do you think that there is any difference between kindness as fruit of the Spirit and just ordinary ‘being nice’?

### Read Isaiah 63:7-9

- How did God show his kindness to his people?
- What is the link between kindness and compassion?

### Read 2 Samuel 9

Years earlier, David promised his friend Jonathan that he would always show kindness to his descendants. Years later, when David reigned over all of Israel, he set out to make good his promise.

- What characteristics of David stand out for you in this story?
- What reasons might David have had for not being kind to Mephibosheth?
- In what specific ways did David show kindness to Mephibosheth?
- What did David get out of his kindness?

David shows kindness to a dead man's son. David has nothing further to gain by this kindness, and, it turns out, a lot to lose (see 2 Samuel 16:3-4).

- What lessons can we learn about kindness from this story?

The book of Proverbs speaks about the importance of kindness. What do the following tells you?

- Proverbs 14:21
- Proverbs 14:31
- Proverbs 19:17

### Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Although Paul doesn't use the word 'kindness' it is the same thing he is talking about.

- How has God showed his comfort / kindness to us?
- How does this enable us to treat others in the same way?

Chris Wright again: “Dame Anita Roddick (founder of the Body Shop) once said: ‘The end result of kindness is that it draws people to you.’ Well, that may be true. But I think we can say with far greater conviction and for a far better reason *‘The end result of kindness is that it draws people to Christ.’*”

### WORK

Kindness is part of the fruit of the Spirit because it doesn't come naturally. Only the Holy Spirit can make us like Jesus. List the ways in which the Lord has been kind to you. How does that affect how ready you are to be kind to others?

# 6. Goodness

## WELCOME

What would you like to be really good at? (It could be a sport, a hobby, a skill)

## WORSHIP

Psalm 19 tells us of the perfection of God's word. Use the psalm to praise God, then pray that as you study his word it will refresh your soul.

## WORD

What do you mean when you use the word 'good'? I guess it depends on the context. If a parent tells a child to be good, what they usually mean is that the child should stop being bad – 'good' is the absence of bad behaviour. If we say that a teacher or a doctor is good, we usually mean that they do their job well. If we say that a song or a film is good, it means that we enjoy it.

So what did Paul mean when he said that the fruit of the Spirit is ... goodness? Maybe it does bring together the things I've just mentioned. Goodness means doing what is right, rather than what is wrong. It means living out our lives with integrity, and it means doing what we can to bless others.

But even then, getting a handle on what it would mean for us to show this goodness in our lives is difficult. Maybe the best

place to start is to ask what it means for God to be good, and then ask how we can mirror that goodness on our own lives.

Read Psalm 107

*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.*

The psalm gives 4 illustrations of God's goodness:

verses 4-9

verses 10-16

verses 17-22

verses 23-32

- What do each of these have in common?
- What needs do the people have in each section?
- Are there any of these you can relate to?
- In each situation the people call out to God for help. Is that your first reaction when you are in trouble?
- According to the psalm, what are some of the ways we should give thanks to for his goodness and love (e.g. v 22, 32)

The psalm ends by saying "Let the one who is wise heed these things and ponder the loving deeds of the Lord."

- What should we be learning from this psalm?
- In what ways can we imitate the goodness of God seen in this psalm?

Read Acts 10:34-43

- What ways can you think of “Jesus went about doing good”?

Jesus not only did what was kind, he did what was good in the sense of always doing what was right. He did what he knew his Father wanted him to do, even when he could have chosen an easier way out.

- In what ways did Jesus do what was ‘good’ by obeying his Father, even if it was costly?
- How does this help us to understand what goodness should look like in our lives?

### WORK

In Romans 12:9, Paul says “Hate what is evil, cling to what is good.” How can you encourage one another to put that into practice.

# 7. Faithfulness

## WELCOME

What is the best animal to have as a pet?

## WORSHIP

Psalm 145 tells us that the Lord is righteous and faithful in all he does. Use the psalm and praise God for his faithfulness to you.

## WORD

It’s probably fair to say that our society has become increasingly self-centred. People do what is best for them, even if sometimes it means letting someone else down. Politicians promise one thing, only to do the opposite. We live in a world when it can be increasingly difficult to know who you can trust.

In an environment like that, ‘faithfulness’ is very attractive, but it does mean going against the flow. But as with the other parts of the fruit, faithfulness begins with God.

One of the things which the Bible says repeatedly about God – he is faithful. And you see that faithfulness played out in the history of God’s people Israel.

God was completely trustworthy and dependable. God's people knew that if God had said something, he would never change his mind. If God promised to do something, he would do it. Of course, for God's Old Testament people there was a downside to that – if God had said that he would punish his people if they rebelled against him, they could be sure he would do it.

But even then, God was faithful in that having committed himself to his people, he never abandoned them.

### Read Psalm 33

Verse 4 says "For the word of the LORD is right and true, he is faithful in all he does."

- In what ways does the psalm talk about God being faithful?

### Read Matthew 25:14-30

"Well done, good and faithful servant"

- In what ways had the first 2 servants been faithful?

### Read Luke 16:10-13

Being faithful leads to being trusted. But you can only be faithful to one master.

- What things in our society do people put their faith in rather than God?
- Are there areas in your life where you find it hard to be faithful?

### Read Colossians 4:7-15

It seems to be just a list of names, but in what ways does Paul hint at the people he writes about being faithful?

- Tychicus
- Barnabas & Mark
- Epaphras

### WORK

It is easy to take God's faithfulness for granted. But it is when we spend time recognising how God has been faithful to us, that the fruit of faithfulness is encouraged to grow in our lives. So – how has God been faithful to you?

# 8. Gentleness

## WELCOME

If you could swap places with anyone for the day, who would you choose?

## WORSHIP

Probably one of the best known passages in the Bible is Psalm 23, which speaks about God's presence with us and his care for us. Use Psalm 23 together, then thank God for times when you have been particularly aware of his care.

## WORD

What comes into your mind when you hear the word 'gentle'? Or the word 'meek'? The next word on Paul's list could be translated either way, and it can sound a bit passive. The word can also be translated 'humble', so we are thinking about not pushing ourselves forward, not thinking too highly of ourselves.

And that is a challenge in our society. Although most people would say that humility is a good thing, in practice most don't live that way. Most people's focus is on their rights, rather than their responsibilities. We are encouraged to live our dreams and so on. In many subconscious ways, we are influenced to be self-assertive, rather than gentle / meek / humble.

Read Psalm 23 again.

Gentleness is probably not the first thing you would think of to describe God in the Old Testament.

- But in what ways does Psalm 23 speak of God in that way?

Read Matthew 11:28-30

- What did Jesus mean when he said that he was "gentle and humble in heart"?
- What does Jesus' gentleness and humility lead to for us?
- What does this tell you about what effect our gentleness should have on others?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

- According to Paul, what are some of the wrong ways to share Christ with others?
- How was Paul like a mother to the Thessalonians?
- In what ways can we share "not only the gospel of God but our lives as well" with those around us?
- Looking through the passage, how are the themes of evangelism and gentleness related?

Read Philippians 2:5-11

- How does the example of Jesus help us to be more gentle?

### WORK

God's gentleness is described using the pictures of a shepherd, and a loving parent. Think about how you have experienced God in these ways, and ask that the Holy Spirit will develop those qualities in you.

# 9. Self-control

### WELCOME

What would be your perfect meal?

### WORSHIP

Psalm 141 reminds us that when we face temptation we can cry out to God for help. Use the psalm and thank God for times when you have known his help when you've been tempted.

### WORD

We come to the last element in Paul's list – self-control. Unlike the previous eight things, we can't start by looking at how this is seen in God, because God does not need to exercise self-control over any sinful tendency within himself.

But for us, self-control is an issue. Oscar Wilde once said 'I can resist anything ... except temptation' and we live in a society where self-control is often not encouraged. A few years ago we were encouraged 'if it feels good, do it' and today in society, we are encouraged to do what we want (as long as it doesn't hurt anyone else, of course!)

So why is self-control so important? Why does it finish Paul's list. I think it might be because a lack of self-control will hinder the growth of all the other things we've looked at.

## Read Galatians 5:19-26

- How do each of the things Paul lists show a lack of self-control?
- How would a lack of self-control prevent the growth of the other things on Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit?
- What is the connection between self-control and keeping in step with the Spirit?
- Why would not doing that lead to being conceited, provoking and envying each other?

## Read 1 Samuel 26

Saul was Israel's first king. But because he was disobedient, God took the kingdom from him and gave it to David. As a result, Saul was determined to kill David. In 1 Samuel 26, David has to choose between self-gratification and self-control.

- Abishai tells David that this is a golden opportunity to kill Saul. (v.8) Why would this have been a very tempting suggestion?
- Why does David resist the temptation to take matters into his own hands (v.9-11)?
- David and Abishai both attribute their actions to God. When we are tempted, how can we know what God's will is?

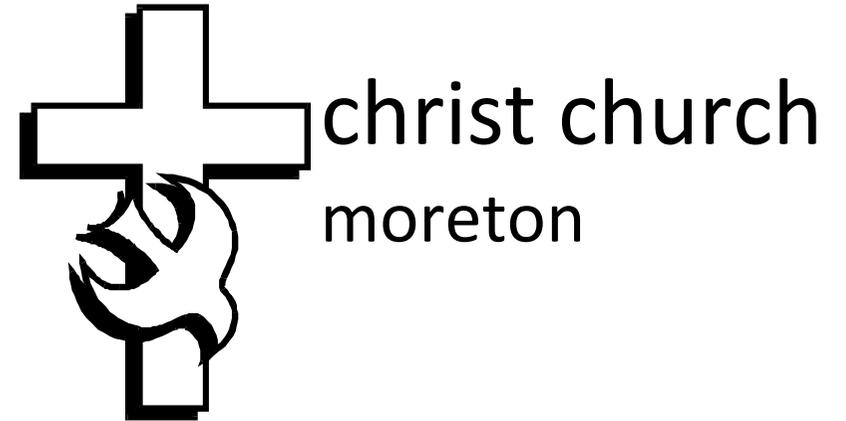
- Notice how God helps David (v.12). How can knowing that God is with us in our struggle help us when we are tempted?

## Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

- What is the relationship between self-control and evangelism?
- What sort of training should we be doing as Christians?
- How might we be running aimlessly (running, but not knowing where we are supposed to be going)?

### WORK

Where in your own life are you aware of the need for greater self-control? What steps will you take, both spiritually and practically, to cultivate this part of the fruit of the Spirit?



making disciples

growing disciples

being disciples