

FRESH FRUIT

MEDITATIONS ON THE
FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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Fresh Fruit

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About the Holy Spirit

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you (John 14:26).

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would be a helper to us after He was crucified, raised and ascended again to the Father. He told the disciples that the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance everything that He had taught them.

The disciples were with Jesus day and night and heard His word, but we, his modern-day disciples, must read or hear the word before it can be brought back to our remembrance. Time spent reading God's word is how we learn and grow in the knowledge of the Father. The Holy Spirit makes God's word come alive to us and helps us to remember what we learn.

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged (John 16:7-11).

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin. It is our conscience, telling us right from wrong. We need to listen to what God is telling us through His Holy Spirit because we are judged in the end.

When we accept Christ as our savior, knowing that He saved us by dying in our place, we receive the Holy Spirit. Everything God offers is free to us because Christ paid the price in advance.

The Holy Spirit gives us His fruit when we ask for them, and they become part of us so that we can produce good fruit in the world. If we

seek the fruit of the spirit, we will also show these fruit in our behavior. We can share these fruit and help others to seek them through Jesus Christ, our savior.

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26).



Love: The first fruit of the Holy Spirit

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25).

Agape is the ancient Greek word which refers to the highest form of love; the love of God for man and of man for God.

Love is the theme of the entire Bible. God is love, and everything else flows from that love.

Because of His great love for us, God will not allow sin to stand between Him and His creation. He personally bridged the separation by sending His son.

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

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 neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:34-40 NIV).

The God of Love

Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love (1 John 4:8).

God's love is pure, and He is pure love. His word, the Bible, is one long love story all about His love for us. This love is not based on anything we can do. There is no way to earn it. It just is, and He loves us just as we are. Not only does He love those who believe in Him, but all of His children, everyone, everywhere, even those who have not come to know Him yet.

God calls us sons and daughters and heirs to His kingdom. We are His family. There is no greater joy than being a part of the family of God and experiencing His love. There is no way for us as human beings to understand something so deep and never-ending. His love is not like our love; it is completely unselfish and free. That is why, even after we brought sin into the world, He still loved us and sent His son to make it right.

As pure love, God listens to our cares, hurts, and struggles. He empathizes and comforts us and works all things for our good. Our Father knows us by name and cares about every detail of our lives. His love is beyond measure. Human love can be lost, but God's love is eternal.

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

Love that comes to us from the Father also needs to flow through us back to Him and out of us to others. It is not a one-way street. Because we have such a Father, and such a blessed love, it is important to share. That is what this fruit is all about. Being loved like this, we cannot keep it to ourselves. Not only should we return God's love, but we should be showing it to the world. If we don't, they will never experience this type of love. This type of love is impossible in this lost and dying world.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one an-

other: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another (John 13:24).

The world does not have this love for each other and they don't understand that God loves them just as they are. We need to tell them. He can't help it. He is love and they are His children. It doesn't matter where they are, what they have done, or what they are doing. He loves them. He loves everyone.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did (does) not know him (1 John 3:1, Jenni's paraphrase).

Though it makes no human sense why the Creator of the universe would care so much about us, He has told us it is so, and we know it in our innermost being. We understand that everyone is important to Him. Let us care about others with this love from God, not as the world loves, but as God loves. Love shown to others can never go wrong.

In our daily prayers, ask God for the ability to show His love to others through the work of the Holy Spirit. Ask for a great measure of this fruit to flow through you. This mystery of God's love may not be understood, but we feel it and rejoice.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. (1 John 4:7).

We love because he first loved us (1 John 4:19).

Prayer: Lord, let us love one another as you love us. Though it is impossible for us to understand your great love, let us show it through our lives. Don't let us forget that you love everyone just as they are. No one is required to be perfect before coming to you. You are love. Amen.

Loneliness

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 (John 13:34).

The God of Love commanded us to love each other. We are not alone, and we know we are loved because God and our Christian brothers and sisters love us. But are we aware of those who are lonely, and don't feel loved? Do we show God's love to them?

We all feel alone sometimes. We may have secrets that cause us to separate ourselves, or are ashamed of our past, so we hide out and allow ourselves to be lonely. We may believe we are different from everyone else and no one understands or likes us. We may just be shy and uncomfortable in large groups, so we don't make friends easily. Loneliness is a painful and confusing place, and we all experience it.

We Christians are the worst at letting people know that we are feeling lonely. If no one reaches out to us, we begin to doubt our likeability, which makes us feel lonelier. Whether it is our turn to feel lonely or not, we need to reach out to others.

When we feel alone, it is especially important to reach out to other Christians, not wait for them to reach out to us. Whether we are just lonely or whether we are going through something difficult, it is important to share with others who believe as we do. There are blessings for both the sharer and the one who helps to bear the burden.

If our feelings of aloneness are brought on because of situations in our daily lives, such as living alone, not having any close friends, financial burdens, or family burdens, we can find rest in the Lord and know that He is working in our lives. We can feel His love through the love of others. Feeling that God has abandoned us and that our prayers are unheard is a lonely feeling indeed.

God is unchanging and never moves away from us. He is everywhere and everything always. When we feel lost, alone and far away from God, it is we who have moved. His word says, 'come to me.' With each movement we make toward God, the less lonely we will feel.

When we look at those around us, we may believe that they have

everything together. They seem to be super Christians, never feel alone or depressed, have great families, and plenty of money. We envy them and sometimes can feel a little bitter because of their supposed success in life. Interestingly enough, they may think the same about us.

What we see and feel about other people is normally not true. Take the time to get to know them, and we find that they have struggles just like we do. It is no wonder we feel alone when we think everyone else is doing so well. Only when we look outside of ourselves will we really feel that we have companionship, and the great love of God.

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

Christians should be the best at loving each other and being helpful. We know that bearing each other's burdens makes our own burdens lighter. However, we often don't notice when others are feeling alone. We can't take our eyes off our own problems or stop worrying about what people might be thinking of us long enough to look around and see how others might be suffering.

Instead of worrying about what we are wearing or how we look or talk, we should be watching for those who are not participating in groups or not in attendance. Self-focus blinds us to the burdens others are carrying.

So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 7:12).

When we are lonely, what do we wish for from our friends? We want them to notice, to care for us, and to share their own experiences and how God helped them overcome. We can share our own feelings of insecurity, worry, or stress so that they feel comfortable opening up about their own. Sharing our experiences is much more easily accepted than advice.

Changing our own self-focused attitudes is not easy. Being able to connect in person, eye to eye, and giving hugs is difficult for many of us, but we can be a friend and not a 'know it all.' Asking ourselves what we would want is a good way to remember how to help those who are lonely.

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others (Philippians 2:3,4).

Thinking of others before thinking of ourselves is not a natural part of human nature. To be able to truly love takes divine intervention and is something we must ask for from God.

As Christians, we have become new creatures, and the spiritual nature we receive from the Holy Spirit is more than able to carry out this task. Our old nature will try to take over and make us think of ourselves first, but Christ's example is to reach out to others.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).

We can come to Him when we are lonely. He is working out His plan in the lives of the lonely and those who are not. There are moments when we are not strong enough in our faith to feel His love when things are bad, but we know He is near, and we will feel it soon. In the meantime, we can rely on each other.

Prayer: Dear Lord, when we are feeling lonely, please come closer so that we can feel your love. Send us those who love you or send us someone who needs your love. You felt these feelings of loneliness on the cross, you know our pain and heartache. We love you Lord and thank you for always being with us no matter what. Amen.

Christ, Our First Love

But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first (Revelations 2:4).

Remembering when we first found Jesus and asked Him to come into our lives, it was such a feeling of elation. We asked Him to forgive our sins, and we felt so much love from Him and for Him. We were so excited we wanted to tell everyone about His great love.

When our sins were first forgiven, we knew how much we owed the Lord. His death on the cross was real and powerful to us. We knew how unworthy we were and knowing that Jesus loved us and died for us was almost unfathomable.

We all have a passion for different things at different times in our lives. Our passions come and go depending on what interests us or what has affected us in some way. Our greatest excitement is usually when something is new. As the newness wears off, the excitement tends to wane. Our passion and excitement for Christ can do the same.

Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little (Luke 7:47).

In the book of Luke, a woman who washed Christ's feet with her tears and anointed His feet with costly perfume was full of passion for the Lord. Her passion was great because Christ had forgiven her many sins. She knew how unworthy she was of this great love.

Unfortunately, as time passes, we lose our passion and excitement about what Jesus has done for us. Hopefully, it is not because we feel we owe Christ less than we did before. In our hearts, we know how unworthy we still are, but we excuse our lack of enthusiasm by saying that we have matured in Christ. We don't want to shout it to the world because it may offend someone. Justifying our lack of passion becomes easy, and we are in danger of becoming cold.

In Revelation 2:1-4, Jesus told the church at Ephesus that even though they were doing good works, were patient and hated evil, they had lost their first love of Him and needed to get that passion back. Was He speaking to us too?

This world is a chaotic place. We have jobs and families, struggles and fears, places to go, and people to see. It is easy to get so bogged down with life that our passion for Christ takes a back seat. Are we letting our daily life get in the way of abundant life?

Have we lost our first love?

We often talk about Christ dying for our sins, but do we think about what that really means? He died a horrendous death, even though it should have been us with nails through our hands and feet. Daily we sin and fall short of His glory, driving those nails deeper and deeper. We owe such a great debt, and we can only pay it with our lives, our love, and our passion.

No matter how long we have been Christians, we will never deserve what Christ has done for us. If we worked at it every minute for eternity, keeping Christ at the center of our lives, we would never be worthy of His undeserved death on the cross. The world is nothing, gives us nothing, and doesn't help us in any way. Only the love of God is life to us.

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength (Mark 12:30).

It is clear what our instructions are, although many people struggle with the last part of this verse. We know how to turn our hearts toward God and to love Him and feel His love in our hearts and souls, but how do we love Him with our strength?

The Greek biblical definition of strength includes words such as ability, energy, and powerful deeds. We can love God by using our abilities, energy, and deeds to make Him known to those around us. We can love God with all our strength.

Everything we have and everything we are is because God sent His son Jesus Christ to die in our place to give us abundant life now, and eternal life with Him. Let's invite God to be involved in all our other passions in life, instead of letting our other passions crowd out God. Stop the world from gradually creeping in by communicating more with Him and strengthening that relationship. God is pure love.

Life cannot be allowed to steal away our love and gratefulness for what He has done for us. If we make Him our first love, the rest of what we love will have more meaning.

Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love (1 John 4:8).

Prayer: Lord, we pray for ways that we can show our love for you and your love for us to everyone around us. We know that you love us more than we will ever know, and we want to have the excitement we knew when we first invited you into our hearts. Your love and your sacrifice are more than we can understand and with your help, we can return to our first love. Amen.

The Assurance

Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him ... And whereas he did all these miracles before them, they did not trust in him¹ ... he had done so many signs before them, yet they didn't believe in him² (John 12:37).

Salvation through faith is assured by God and His son Jesus Christ. It is real, but the devil is blinding the eyes of the world. The world is sick and dying.

We have seen and read about His signs, and we are assured that Christ is truth and love. The evil in the world hides the truth and works in lives to draw them away from God. It is no secret to us why people won't accept Him.

The world is worse in many ways now than it was when Christ walked this earth and performed miracles. Miracles like the ones He performed are not as prevalent because our faith is weak. We are assured of salvation when we ask Christ into our lives and hearts, but when trying to show this assurance to others, we run into those whose eyes have been blinded.

There are those who think God is a myth. They believe that the Bible and records of His life and death are not true. Therefore, they say, we would be idiots to believe.

If they truly listened and studied, not just the Bible, but scholars and old manuscripts and the prophecies that were fulfilled, they would know that God is not a myth.

Trying to assure people of God's salvation comes easiest after we develop a close relationship with them and they can see how God works in our lives. We can point out our experiences and the miraculous ways they are resolved.

Then there are those who know there is a God and that they should probably be following Him, but don't feel the time is right. Following

1 The Original Aramaic New Testament in Plain English- with Psalms & Proverbs Copyright © 2007; 8th edition Copyright © 2013
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2 Word English Bible, public domain

Him now would ruin their 'fun.' They think there is plenty of time to follow Him more closely later, and they think they are probably safe because they merely believe. They are not considering that the devil also believes, but will not have eternal life with God.

None of us are sure that we have tomorrow. At some point, it will be too late for those who keep putting their so-called pleasures before God. We need to show them that He gives joy, takes away burdens, leads, guides, strengthens and loves. They will never be sorry to give up what they think is 'fun' now for what God has for all of us.

There are also those who think we are all going to the same place when we die because we are all basically good. We can worship anything we want; any higher power will do. They believe that all religions are the same and may or may not be real.

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god" (Isaiah 44:6).

We who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ know the plan that God, in His great love for us, has put in place to renew humankind's relationship with Him. We have a great responsibility to show that God is real. He is the only true God. Jesus is the only one who died in our place and rose from the dead. We are all sinners and deserved death, but He took the punishment, and only through Him can we be reconciled to God.

Today is the day for us to show God's love to the unlovely, His peace to the struggling, and His hope to the hopeless. All can be assured salvation through Jesus Christ by confessing their sins and asking Jesus to be their Lord and Savior.

Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away (James 4:14).

Life here is very short compared to eternity, but in it, we can have love, joy, peace, and so much more. Assurance of eternal life with God comes from knowing Jesus Christ and is not a secret for us to hold, but a gift to be shared with those who do not know Him yet.

Daily, we wonder why those around us don't call out to our marvel-

ous God. But have we told them about Him or shown them His love? He is everywhere and works every second (as we understand time), to bring people into His loving arms. How great is His love for us and for all who call on His name.

We may live in a world of darkness and sorrow, but we do not have to partake of its pain. We have, not only a friend and brother, but a King and Lord, who has power and might, who will make good out of any bad thing that happens to us. He is God Almighty and yet, He loves and is gentle, allowing everyone the free choice of whether to accept the assurance of His love, His care, and His eternal life. This is what we can share.

No matter how the world may view us, we have what others want. The world is searching for assurances. There is a void that only Christ can fill. We can rejoice that we have God's assurance and we need to share it.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Prayer: Lord, there are mysteries and scriptures that we may not understand, but help us tell our own stories of who we were before we found you, and how you saved us. Help us share your love and how you work in our lives daily. We are willing Lord. Help us to show the assurance of eternal life with you. Amen.

The Benefits of Being a Christian

Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you (Luke 6:38).

The biggest benefit of being a Christian is, of course, eternal life with Christ. We have not only received mercy and grace and had our sins forgiven, but so much more.

Why then do we meet people who have received Christ as their Savior and Lord who still seem unhappy? This is not right. There are troubles in this world, but with Jesus, we can have abundant life with Him. Abundant life is not a life free from pain, but with faith in Him, it is a way to live confident that He is working all things for our good.

Some Christians are still struggling along in life as if they didn't have a Father, Lord, and Savior who loves them and wants the best for them. They continue to live as they did before and do not enjoy His great love and the fruit of His Holy Spirit in their lives.

Of King David: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagles (Psalm 103:1-5).

The benefits of being a Christian are not just eternal. If we give Him our lives, our love, our worries, our cares, our joys, and hurts, we will have peace that passes our understanding. We can bring to God everything we have, everything we do and everything we think. He wants to have a personal relationship with us, closer than any personal relationship we have here, but if we spend less time with God than we do our human friends, we are missing out on many benefits.

He is the only friend who gives back to us more than we give, listens without complaining, and is always with us no matter what. God will bless us if we simply give ourselves to Him and to others. If

we feel we are not receiving from God, perhaps it is because we are not giving to God.

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:11).

Many people think that the world's misery is God's fault. Christians know that the powers of darkness at work in this world are truly the cause. God does not tempt us, nor does He cause bad things to happen.

We can't expect God to undo the laws of nature when something bad is happening. We can, however, expect God to bring good out of the situation for those who love Him. God only gives good gifts to His children.

Be not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2).

Our benefits, our blessings come when we stay in communication with God, stay close to Him and seek to do the next right thing according to the scriptures. If we continue to live the same way we were living before He saved us, nothing will change in our lives on earth.

When we stay close to God, reading His word and praying for knowledge and wisdom daily, we will trust Him, feel His love, and live life with a different attitude. We will experience life more abundantly and joyfully.

We can't be stagnated Christians who are not receiving all the benefits He wants to give us. We need to make Christ the center of our lives, not our jobs, money, cars, or even family. God is first.

Putting Him off in a corner and only calling on Him when we need help is an unfair relationship. We wouldn't like it if our children or friends did that to us.

God's word is clear on this. He desires first place in every part of our lives. Though He already knows everything, He wants us to tell Him what is going on in our lives. He wants to commune with us and be the center of our world. It is not too much to give to Him when we consider the blessings we get in return.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Matthew 6:33).

We came to Christ because we know He is the way to abundant life on earth, and eternal life with Him in heaven. Seeking God first is the way to receive all His blessings or benefits. We don't seek God for the blessings, but the blessings are a by-product of seeking Him and putting Him first. The biggest benefit of all is that God loves us and sent His son to die in our place.

Prayer: Lord, help us put you first in all things, not for your blessings and benefits but because you deserve it. Thank you for forgiving our selfishness and for blessing us even though we don't deserve it. We want to keep you in the center of our lives, minds, and hearts. Amen.

His Life Was Not Easy

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

If we think our lives are difficult, we need to think about Jesus' life before starting His ministry.

We all know that Jesus came as a baby born in a barn. He was born of Mary, a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit, which might make us think that life was not that much of a hardship for Him. These mysteries are difficult to understand, but we know from historical records that these events occurred.

The book of Isaiah was written at least 200 and possibly 400 years before Jesus was born and predicts His birth. God was preparing the people for this momentous event. His plan to bring us back into a right relationship depended on Christ dying on the Cross for our sins, and to do that, He had to arrive on earth.

He could have just popped on the scene when He was thirty and started His ministry. He didn't have to come as a baby. He is God, after all. We don't realize how important the birth of Christ is. We celebrate His birthday, but we don't realize that He could have come in any way.

After His birth, His life was not easy. He was born in a very difficult situation. His family was not wealthy. They were not royalty. He had to learn to walk and talk just like every baby.

The King at the time was so set on killing Him that he had all the baby boys under 2 years old killed. What a wicked and difficult time it was.

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men (Matthew 2:16).

I'm sure His family experienced fear for His life. He had brothers

and sisters. He played, worked, slept, was cold, hot, and tired. His entire life was difficult, just like ours. He had good times and bad, just like us.

Sometimes I think we skip right from His birth, to His ministry, to His death without any thought to what His actual upbringing and life might have been. This is one reason Christ came as a baby.

God loved us so much that He allowed Jesus to experience everything we experience and more. We complain when things in our lives get difficult. We sometimes even blame God, but He understands our struggles and pain because He suffered them, too.

Life in this world will always be a struggle, but Jesus showed us the way to live. He forgives our bad choices when we bring them to Him. He is in heaven now, and we will be with Him someday, living without pain and struggles, but we need to follow His life examples here.

We need to love God and love each other and give of ourselves for His glory at Christmas and always. We can celebrate His birth, death, and resurrection, but should remember His life and thank Him for His great love and sacrifice.

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Prayer: Lord, thank you for coming to us as a baby and living a life of struggle just like we do. Thank you for understanding us, loving us, and forgiving our sins. Show us the way to live as you would have us live, loving you and each other, trusting you and demonstrating your love to all. Amen.

Trust Can Be a Choice

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).

We put our faith and trust in God, knowing that the hope we have in Jesus will come to pass. In God's word, the original meaning of trust is very similar to the word used for 'putting your faith in.' We put our faith in God, and we trust Him even when He doesn't do things the way we would like.

Do we do that for others? When we put our faith and trust in someone, and they let us down, do we continue to trust them?

We've heard people say that trust, once lost, must be earned. We understand that if someone has been untrustworthy or unfaithful, and let us down many times, we would have difficulty trusting them again. However, when we lose trust or faith in someone, can they actually **earn** it back?

It seems that even when they are not doing anything wrong, we struggle to trust them and withhold our faith. This attitude does not encourage their trustworthiness. Why bother if we are never going to trust them anyway?

It is a perpetual cycle that only ends when we, who have lost faith, choose to trust again without reserve because the more we don't trust, the more we don't trust.

There are some things in life that we must earn, and there are some things freely given. Where does trust come in? Trust is necessary for loving relationships to flourish, yet it is so easy to lose. Trust is vital for love.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:7).

Love, faith, trust, hope, and forgiveness are all tied up together for the Christian. True love must have faith and trust, and since we all make mistakes, there must also be forgiveness. God not only forgives us, but He also forgets about the wrong we committed.

When someone we love lets us down or does something untrustworthy, instead of holding it against them until a time when we might

or might not trust them again, choose love and choose to trust them now. Choose to have faith that the untrustworthy act will not happen again. Choose to trust and forgive.

Trust is both an emotional and logical act. Emotionally, it is where you expose your vulnerabilities to people, but believing they will not take advantage of your openness. Logically, it is where you have assessed the probabilities of gain and loss, calculating expected utility based on hard performance data, and concluded that the person in question will behave in a predictable manner. In practice, trust is a bit of both. I trust you because I have experienced your trustworthiness and because I have faith in human nature (Changingminds.org).

Even though the definition from Changingminds.org says that, logically, we assess whether someone will let us down again before we can decide to trust them, a Christian's attitude is different, especially with those we love. If love believes all things, shouldn't we choose to trust in our loved ones even after they have let us down?

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not just seven times, but seventy times seven times!" (Matthew 18:21, 22).

Hopefully, we all understand that this does not apply to physical or mental abuse, adultery, or constantly repeated sin. We are talking about mistakes and even sin that the person is sincerely sorry for and determined not to repeat just as we are when we go to the Lord.

None of us are perfect, and the world and the devil are working to make us fail Christ and fail each other. Christ forgives us, so we need to forgive each other and make a choice to trust.

We can't truly forgive someone and then hold a lack of trust over their heads. That is not love or forgiveness. Love, forgiveness, and trust go together and are a choice that we make, not something that is earned. Our human nature wants proven trust, but trust and faith are choices and are not subject to proof.

Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have

seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

Faith, trust, and belief in God are greater because we have not seen. Trust, therefore, in a person without being proven or earned, is also greater. Difficult, yes, impossible, no. When we are struggling to trust someone in our lives, we can count on God to help us and to know when to choose to trust and when to forgive and move on.

“Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?” (Jeremiah 32:27).

Prayer: Lord, help us choose to trust those who have let us down and to have faith that our trust is deserved. Help us to know when to have faith and when to move on from difficult situations. Keep our minds from worry and fear and keep love in our hearts always. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

Self-Forgiveness

“And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses” (Mark 11:25).

Forgiving what others have against us and forgiving ourselves is difficult. God loves us and forgives our sins if we confess them to Him and ask Him into our hearts. That forgiveness is powerful, and we are instructed to forgive others in the same way, including ourselves.

Many of us have had times in life where we knew we were not living the way God would like us to and had no regard for the consequences. Even those who have been Christians for many years, active in the church, taught Sunday school, and had a wonderful relationship with Christ as their savior might have a past of which they are ashamed.

When someone with a sinful past, or a Christian who has been secretly sinning, wakes up and accepts the Lord or makes their way back to become whom God wants, they will ask for God’s forgiveness, and it will be given. We have that assurance. God will forgive our sins.

God’s forgiveness is ultimately what is important, but many who have been forgiven by God will still cry out to Him every time they remember their sins. They will ask the Lord over and over for His forgiveness, knowing in their hearts that they only need to ask once. The shame and guilt are overwhelming. This re-asking for forgiveness can go on for years or even a lifetime.

The church teaches us repeatedly that God loves us and forgives our sins but there is a forgiveness that is not discussed very often. Sometimes God must reveal it to us.

It is not God’s forgiveness we are missing; it is our own.

“No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (Hebrews 8:11).

We need to listen when God tells us that He forgives us and that our sins are no longer remembered by Him. Now is the time to forgive ourselves. He does not remember our sins so why do we?

Even though this is not taught often in church, it is very important to our relationship with God. Forgiving oneself is not easy. The devil, the accuser, will bring up the shame of sin repeatedly.

If we continue to feel unforgiven, even knowing that God has forgiven us will make it difficult to mature in our relationship with Christ. It will be difficult to do any good for the kingdom if we continue to feel unworthy of God's love. Not forgiving ourselves make us unsuccessful in whatever we try to do for the Lord.

The Bible says a lot about forgiveness, but does not address forgiving oneself specifically. However, in Acts 10:34 (NIV), Peter said, "**In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.**" We know we should forgive others, so if we don't forgive ourselves, we are showing partiality. God forgives those we would consider to be the 'worst' of sinners, and we know that we must forgive them, too. So why is it so difficult to forgive ourselves?

God has forgiven us, and who are we to argue with God? To continually dwell on sins that God has forgiven is in direct opposition to what God tells us to do.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for forgiving my sins. I know that I must also forgive myself. Please help me to forgive myself for my behaviors, words, attitudes and all that I have done that was against your ways and help them not to come to my mind again. Amen.