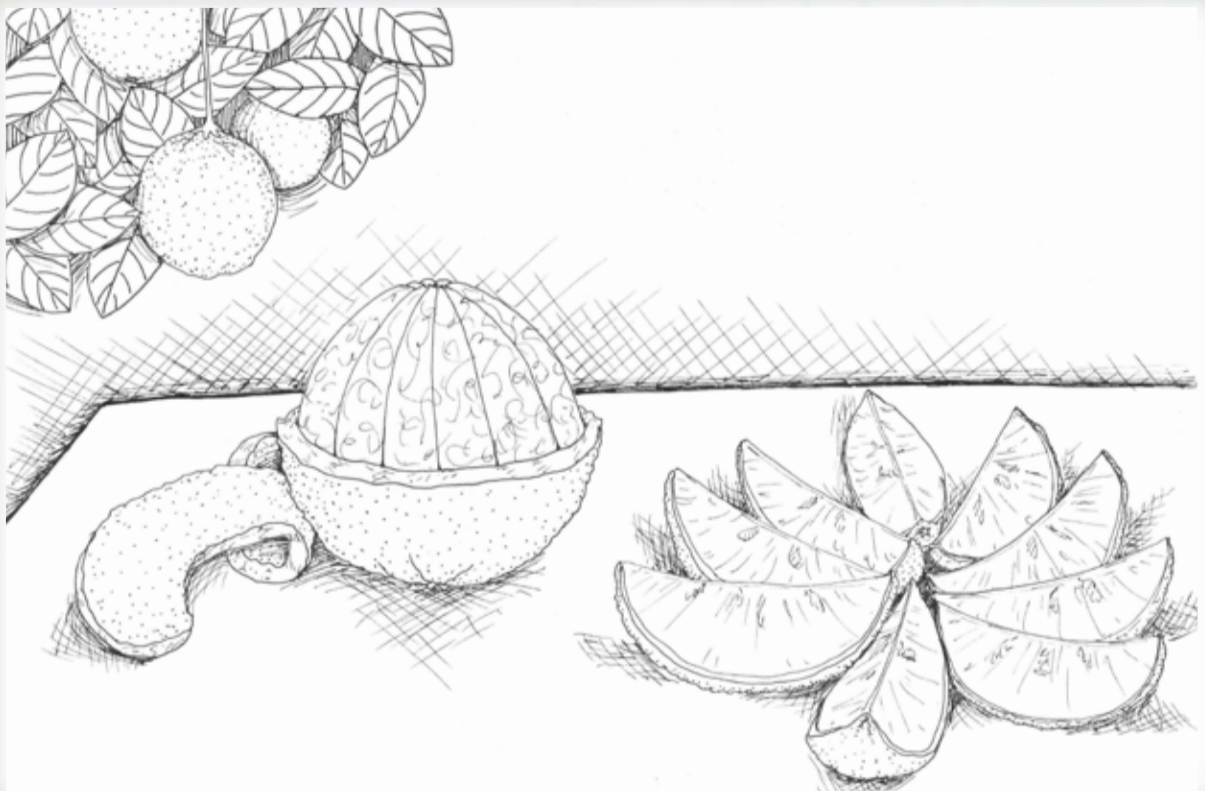


The **fruit** of the **Spirit**



The fruit of the Spirit is
Love - Joy - Peace
Longsuffering - Gentleness - and Goodness
Faith - Meekness - and Temperance
The fruit of the Spirit is Love!



Jesus - our example

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps" 1 Pt. 2:21

Let's take a journey far back in time. We arrive in a little village in the Middle East. It's night, it's dark - and the whole village seems to be sleeping. But in a little manger, light penetrates from the cracked walls. A tired young mother is sighing in pain. A scream is heard - and a little new baby boy enters this world.

This baby is not just another baby. He is Immanuel - God with us. He is the King of the Universe, Life itself. The Creator of all, the eternal God, humbled Himself and became a fetus in the womb of a poor lady. It's a mystery too wonderful for us to understand.

2000 years ago the Almighty God walked on this planet as a child like you. He was born into a poor family, and from a young age He had to work hard to help His family survive. The

village He grew up in was not a very safe and godly place. People didn't understand His important mission, and often He would be ridiculed. He was a good teacher, but the priests were jealous at Him and all the time tried to twist His words. Eventually they got the government on their side and the mob stirred up. Jesus was arrested, scourged and beaten. On false accusations they killed Him as a cruel criminal by nailing Him to a wooden cross.

Despite all the challenges, trials and temptations Jesus met in His life, Jesus never got angry and upset. His LOVE for the human race caused Him to be LONG-SUFFERING in tribulations. Even though things were rough around Him, He was always filled with calm PEACE and JOY in His heart. He reached out to humanity in pure GOODNESS, GENTLENESS and MEEKNESS. By exercising strict TEMPERANCE and continually connecting with His Father through FAITH and prayer, He kept His mind clear and alert to withstand temptations.

Jesus' life was a demonstration of the fruit of the Spirit - the fruit Jesus longs to see in our lives! During the next evenings we will spend time with Jesus. We'll share exciting stories that will help us understand what the fruit of the Spirit means - and we'll pray that God will bless us with these fruits which will enrich our lives, make us a blessing to others and prepare us to live with Jesus in His beautiful home for all eternity!



The fruit of the Spirit is LOVE

"Love suffers long and is kind;
love does not envy;
love does not parade itself,
is not puffed up;
does not behave rudely,
does not seek its own,
is not provoked, thinks no evil;
does not rejoice in iniquity,
but rejoices in the truth;
bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.
Love never fails..."
1. Cor. 13:4-8

Once upon a time there was a little boy named John. He lived together with his mum, dad and sister in a little village close by the sea. John loved when dad took him to the sea. He would sit at the shore and look at the huge sailboats. Oh, how he would like to have such a ship himself!

One day John got a wonderful idea. Why not make a little sailboat - his own little model of the big sailboats cutting through the mighty waves of the sea? The dream grew in his mind, and he began to work on its fulfilment. He asked dad to help him get wood and mum to help him get a robe and some paint. Even his little sister agreed to give him a cloth she had used for her dolls.

John worked hard. As the piece of wood gradually transformed to the shape of a boat, his enthusiasm grew. At last the boat looked complete, and he could fasten the sail. He quickly tied the robe to the front end and ran to the office. -Dad, dad,

he shouted, my sailboat is finished! Oh, may I run down to the sea and try?!

With dad's acknowledgement, he ran towards the shore. Oh, never before his legs had felt so light. A fresh breeze made the water dance, and the waves splashed and whirled up glittering sand, shining as crystals in the sun. The great moment had come!

Carefully John placed the boat on the water. He firmly took hold of the robe and directed his wonderful new creation, in circles and curves, rocking the waves like the big ships. Life was like a dream.

But suddenly - suddenly something terrible happened. John was so focused on his boat as he ran that he did not notice a big stone in front of him. Suddenly he found himself tumbling over the stone and losing the robe in his hand. He lay flat out in the sand, and before he could even fathom what had happened, the boat gradually but surely was carried by the waves into the deep waters.

-Oh, my boat, my boat!, cried John as he realised the tragedy. His first instinct was to run and swim after the boat, but reason told him that would be putting life at risk. The boat grew smaller and smaller and finally seemed to be consumed by the endless sea. John couldn't keep his tears back. In one day his dream had been crushed.

Days passed by. Still John couldn't get the boat out of his mind. One day he was walking in town. He was passing by the grocery shop, the cloth shop and the barbers shop. Suddenly his eyes grew big, and his mouth fell open. As he passed the toy shop, something caught his attention. -That's my boat! He exclaimed. Without a second thought he ran into the shop. He had almost grabbed the boat if the manager had not stopped him with his firm hand. -Are you trying to steal, little man?, the manager angrily shouted. -No, no, I'm sorry, John stuttered... But you see I made this

boat, it's mine for sure, just look at... The piercing eyes of the manager stopped him. -This boat belongs to the toys of my shop, and if you want it, you have to buy it, he said with an authoritative, none-discussable voice. John felt emotions of total unfairness welling up in him, the eyes filling with tears, but he tried to keep it under control and asked: -How much? 500 shillings, the manager mumbled. 500 shillings, John repeated for himself - that's a lot of money for a little boy!

But John was determined. He would buy back his boat. The next days were filled with busy activity. All around the neighbourhood he would offer his helping hands. Every free minute he employed. Just a few shillings a day, but still...

One day as he counted his shillings, he found out that he had reached the amount. He ran to town, eager and anxious to see if his boat was still there. Sure enough! He held his shillings tight and with firm steps he entered the shop. The manager looked up. -So, he laughed scornfully, are you going to give it a new try? John opened his hand, and let the shillings roll. The manager counted in disbelief - 500 shillings! In utter silence he took the boat from the shelf and placed it in the hands of John. Enraptured John pressed the boat to his chest, exclaiming: Now you are double mine! First I made you, and then I bought you back.

Do you know another who says the same about you? Jesus Christ made you. Through leading us into sin, the devil succeeded in carrying us away from our Creator. We were lost - just like the boat was lost on the waves of the sea. But Jesus couldn't forget us. He determined to buy us back at any cost. The price was high - He paid with His own blood. Jesus says about you: You are double mine! First I created you and then I bought you back with my own blood. This is LOVE. Jesus has paid a price so high that it can buy back every person on the face of this planet. Everything is done on His side, now the choice is yours and mine. Eternal life is given on condition of obedience. Do you want to respond to the LOVE of your Creator and Redeemer and give your life to Jesus in loving obedience?



The fruit of the Spirit is JOY

"Rejoice
in the Lord
always.
Again I will say,
rejoice!"

Phil. 4:4

One day as I was walking through our garden, I heard a strange sound. I recognized it as the sound of a bird, but not of a happy bird whistling its joyful tones gliding through the air.

It was late summer, and our garden was full of delicacies. Apples and pears, plums and cherries, red berries and black berries. The birds liked the red berries in particular. Have you ever tasted fresh strawberries? Oh, what a sweet, aromatic taste! But we didn't want to have all the nice berries eaten by the birds, so my dad would take a big, blue net and cover the berry bushes - this was a warning to the birds not to enter forbidden ground.

But one particular bird did not heed the warning. The temptation of the red berries was too strong to resist. So he presumptuously ventured the forbidden ground. But oh, how he would regret that choice! As he was fighting to reach the berries, he suddenly noticed that the net was fastening around his neck. He desperately tried to pass through the barrier, flapping his wings, but lo - soon the net was twinned around his wings as well. Now the bird began to despair. The longing for the delicious berries faded in a struggle to regain his lost freedom. Frantically the bird kicked and flapped and twinned, but the more he tried to come loose, the firmer the net fastened. Soon he could feel the bloody pain of the sharp treads piercing his skin.

At this time I came walking through the garden. The horror and deplorable condition of the bird caught my attention and awakened my pity. The bird had no power of its own to free itself from the terrible net. I could sense the terror of the bird as I drew closer. He must have thought that his last hour had come. He gathered his last strength for a final attempt to escape.

Carefully I took the bird in my hands. Examining the situation, I realised that I needed other equipment to rescue the poor creature. I got a scissor, and gently cut the bird loose thread for thread. The bird opposed and with its pointed beak he bit me. It hurt. -I am here to rescue you, not to destroy, I told the little bird. Eventually every thread was loose. I lifted the bird in the air, opened my hands and cried: Fly bird, fly - you are a free bird now! Oh, what joy - what relief! With happy songs the bird flew and celebrated its deliverance.

In the beginning God walked in the garden. He told the first humans that one tree was forbidden ground. This tree would test their loyalty to God. Just like the bird, Eve curiously ventured the forbidden ground, and the net of the enemy was twinned about her. She was trapped. She lost her freedom.

Every day the devil tries to deceive us to venture forbidden ground. He wants to steal away from us the freedom we have in Christ. He makes sin look very inviting, but as we try to taste the fruits of disobedience, he casts his hellish net around us. The more we try in our own power

to come loose, the more we are trapped. Only as we realize our hopeless condition and cry to Jesus for help, we can come loose. Jesus will bow down, and patiently help us out of our misery.

Every day Jesus tries to help sinners out of Satan's net. But sometimes we treat Him more like an enemy than a deliverer. This hurts Jesus. Because He only wants to help us - He reaches out to us in pure love and compassion. Jesus longs to free us from the net of sin and give us liberty. But He can only do so if we allow Him. As soon as we cry for help, He will be there, He will lift us up out of the terrible net and say: Fly, fly for me with the message of love. You are free now! Experiencing this freedom from guilt and shame, will fill our hearts with JOY so pure and deep.

In the Bible Jesus tells us: "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free... Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin... Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."

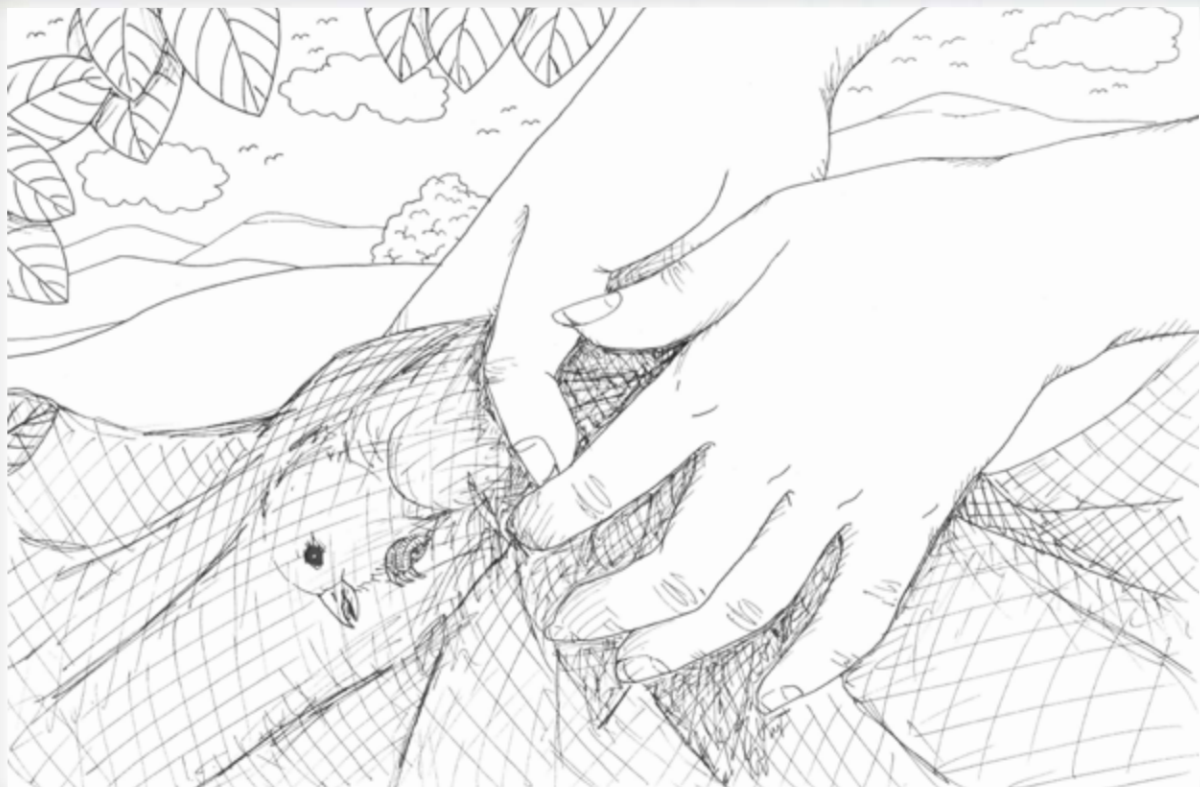
Jesus want's us to be free from the net of the evil one, He wants to guide us in the safe paths and give us His deep joy. David expresses this beautifully in one of his psalms:

You will show me the path of life;

In Your presence is fullness of joy;

At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

-Ps. 16:11



The fruit of the Spirit is PEACE

"The peace of God,
which surpasses all
understanding, will
guard your hearts
and minds through
Christ Jesus"
Phil. 4:7

Long time ago there was a group of people living in the Alps of Southern Europe, called the Waldensians. They loved Jesus. They had a passion for the Holy Word of God. Their unbending obedience and eagerness to spread the Bible made the authorities of those days extremely angry. The religious leaders wanted to control the people, and they were afraid for the Bible to reach the common men, women and children. If the people got the Bible themselves, it would be evident that many of the things the religious leaders were telling them were false. The leaders feared to lose their control and authority.

A terrible persecution broke out against the Waldensians. They were hunted like wild beasts. That's why they fled to the high mountains. Here they hopefully could find refuge and live in peace.

Tonight I will introduce you to a little Waldensian girl, named Arlette.

At an early age she lost her mother. Father was a Waldensian missionary. Secretly he would try to share the good news of the gospel. This was an extremely dangerous task.

As Arlette was left with him motherless, dad would look into the innocent eyes of his daughter and his heart would shake. He knew that his missionary call was risking not only his, but also her life. What should he do? Should he leave her with someone else?

Arlette loved her father, and bravely refused a convenient life with another family. She would rather live a life of sacrifice, suffer and conquer for her Master. She surely did not understand the depths of her choice, but her heart was filled with a trusting, innocent love and commitment to both her earthly and heavenly father.

One day news reached the little broken family. A missionary friend had picked up the rumours of an increased effort from the authorities to get rid of the Waldensians. There was no time to lose. Dad carefully packed their few belongings, and together with a handful of other missionaries, they made their way deep into the forest.

The clouds seemed to gather around them, partly hiding the last rays of the sun. Long shadows fell on the muddy path. Drops of rain ran down Arlette's brow, and took the place of drops of sweat. She longed for rest, she longed for a soft and comfortable bed, but she didn't complain. Suddenly a painting she had had over her bed came vividly to her mind. It was picturing the good shepherd leading his sheep. -I'm a little lamb, she thought to herself, safely lead by Jesus, my beloved Shepherd. My Lord suffered for me, I feel privileged that I can endure hardships for His holy names sake.

Darkness was about to come upon them, as they reached a broken down shack hid away in a valley. To them it was like a mansion. Though the wind piped through the walls, it was a blessed shelter of rest.

The rain had soaked their clothes, and one of the young missionaries suggested that they make a fire. Dad looked worried. He didn't oppose, but said with a low voice: Where there is smoke, there are people... You know they are looking for us. The fire filled the little shack with a cosy atmosphere, and as the fire warmed their bodies, they lively shared mission stories warming the heart. Soon Arlette peacefully slept on her father's lap.

But alas - the peaceful sleep was suddenly broken by angry cries and the sound of chains and spears. Arlette saw the room filling with angry men. She firmly held on to her father's hand, as the angry men handcuffed them and led them all the way back to the village. They were thrown into an ugly damp prison. Dad knew what

was waiting, and couldn't sleep. He thought of his daughter and feared what fate would meet her. Would they take her life, or would they take her from her and attempt to discipline and re-educate her to follow their unbiblical beliefs? Arlette peacefully slept, dreaming she was a lamb in the arms of Jesus, her Shepherd.

We can hardly understand how cruel people can be when they do not have Jesus in their hearts. The proud religious leaders boasted that they did God a service by getting rid of those who were a threat for their power. In their zealous frenzy, they decided to burn the Waldensian missionaries to death.

The Waldensians were lead to the market, where piles of wood were made ready. The brave missionaries refused to give up their faith, they stood firm just like the three friends of Daniel in the Bible. Arlette still clung on to her father's hand. A strange determination and almost prideful peace filled her heart. Scenes from the life of her beloved Saviour flashed through her mind, His agony and sacrifice. She felt honoured that she could share in His sufferings.

As the missionaries were brought to the stake, a cry went up from the crowd that had gathered. -You can't burn a little child - it's a child, save her life! As dad was thrown into the fire, a strong man grabbed Arlette. She resisted - she didn't want to be re-educated and deny her Master, she would rather suffer for Him! In the chaos created, she was able to twist herself free from the strong mans grip, and in the matter of seconds she ran into the fire and grabbed her fathers hand. So they died there together for their fellow Master and Friend.

The PEACE that radiated from the martyrs was a strong testimony of the faith and hope burning in their heart, and many a spectator went home from the scene in deep thoughts. They longed for the same PEACE - and many of them searched, found and rose up in place of the martyrs.

In the Bible Jesus says: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Jn 16:33 When we give ourselves fully to Jesus, He has promised to give us His peace. Even when things around us may be discouraging and hard, we can rest in Jesus and trust that He will carry us through.



The fruit of the Spirit is LONGSUFFERING

"When you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God."

1. Peter 2:20

Many years ago there was a young couple called David and Svea. They were happily married and lived a good life in Sweden in Northern Europe, together with their little 2 year old boy. David and Svea loved the Lord and they felt strongly impressed to go as missionaries to Africa. They longed to share the good news of the gospel with a tribe that had never had the opportunity to hear about Jesus.

Together with another family they set out to a remote area in Congo. They had sought the Lord in prayer, and felt impressed that He wanted them to go to this place. They knew that it was not without danger, since this tribe was stooped in witchcraft and paganism.

As they reached their destination, they were met with rejection from the chief. He would not even let them enter the town, because he was afraid the local gods would be angry with him. Eventually they decided to build their small mud huts just outside the town.

They prayed for a spiritual breakthrough, but there was none. The only contact with the villagers was a young boy who was allowed to sell them some food. Svea thought to herself that even if this was the only one she could share the good news of the gospel with, she would do all in her power to enlighten his life - and she succeeded. But there were no other encouragements. Meanwhile, malaria continued to strike one member of the little band after another. Eventually the other missionary couple had had enough, and David and Svea were left alone. Then, of all things, Svea found herself pregnant in the middle of the primitive wilderness. When the time came for her to give birth, the village chief softened enough to allow a midwife to help her. A little girl was born, whom they named Aina. The delivery, however, was exhausting, and a few days later Svea died. David was crushed. He dug a crude grave and buried his dear, young wife. He was so disheartened and bitter that he immediately left the mission field. The newborn little girl was left with the other missionary family which had gone back to the mission station and with a heavy heart David headed back to Sweden.

Everything seemed to work against the missionaries. Sickness struck the other missionary family, and they both died in a matter of a few days. Little Aina was handed on to some American missionaries, who adjusted her Swedish name to "Aggie" and eventually brought her back to the United States at age three.

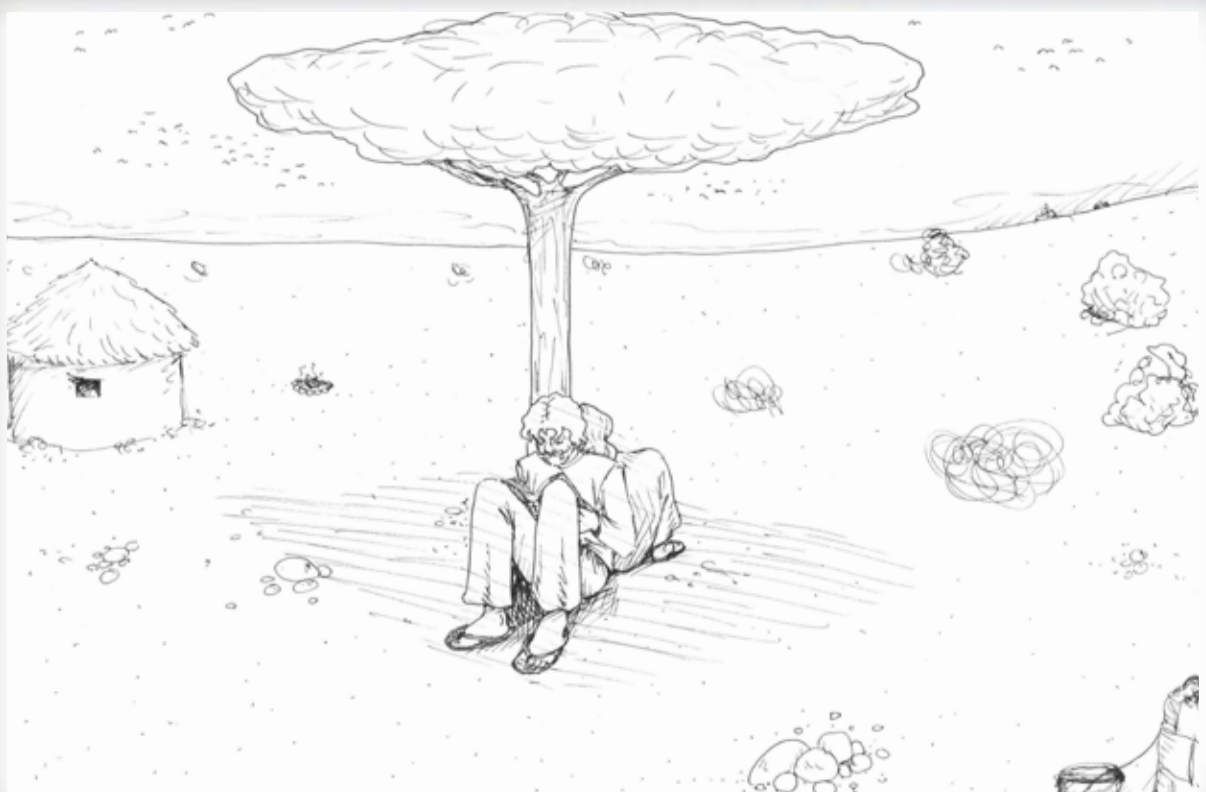
Aggie grew up in the States. She married and gave birth to a daughter, then a son. One day a Swedish religious magazine appeared in her mailbox. She had no idea who had sent it, and of course she couldn't read the words. But as she turned the pages, all of a sudden a photo stopped her cold. There in a primitive setting was a grave with a white cross-and on the cross were the words SVEA FLOOD. Aggie jumped in her car and went straight for a college faculty member who, she knew, could translate the article. "What does this say?" she demanded. The instructor summarized the story: It was about missionaries who had come to N'dolera long ago ... the birth of a white baby ... the death of the young mother ... the one little African boy who had been led to Christ ... and how, after the whites had all left, the boy had grown up and finally persuaded the chief to let him build a school in the village. The article said that gradually he won all his students to Christ... the children led their parents to Christ..... even the chief had become a Christian. Today there were six hundred Christian believers in that one village.... All because of the sacrifice of David and Svea.

Aggie was touched and thrilled. She determined to go back to Sweden and find her real father, David. David was now an old man. He had remarried, fathered four more children, and generally dissipated his life with alcohol. He had recently suffered a stroke. Still bitter, he had one rule in his family: "Never mention the name of God - because God took everything from me." After an emotional reunion with her half brothers and half sister, Aggie brought up the subject of seeing her father. The others hesitated. "You can talk to him," they replied, "even though he's very ill now. But you need to know that whenever he hears the name of God, he flies into a rage. Aggie was not to be deterred. She walked into the squalid apartment, with liquor bottles everywhere, and approached the seventy-three-year-old man lying in a rumpled bed. "Papa~" she said tentatively. He turned and began to cry. "Aina," he said. "I never meant to give you away." "It's all right, Papa," she

replied, taking him gently in her arms. "God took care of me." The man instantly stiffened. The tears stopped. "God forgot all of us. Our lives have been like this because of Him." He turned his face back to the wall. Aggie stroked his face and then continued, undaunted. "Papa, I've got a little story to tell you, and it's a true one. You didn't go to Africa in vain. Mama didn't die in vain. The little boy you won to the Lord grew up to win that whole village to Jesus Christ. The one seed you planted just kept growing and growing. Today there are six hundred African people serving the Lord because you were faithful to the call of God in your life. ... Papa, Jesus loves you. He has never hated you." The old man turned back to look into his daughter's eyes. His body relaxed. He began to talk. And by the end of the afternoon, he had come back to the God he had resented for so many decades. Over the next few days, father and daughter enjoyed warm moments together. Aggie and her husband soon had to return to America-and within a few weeks, David Flood had gone into eternity.

A few years later, Aggie and her husband visited some meetings in London. The preacher gave a stunning mission-report from Congo. He was overseeing more than 110,000 baptized believers. Aggie could not help going to ask him afterward if he had ever heard of David and Svea Flood. "Yes, madam," the man replied in French, his words then being translated into English. "It was Svea Flood who led me to Jesus Christ. I was the boy who brought food to your parents before you were born. In fact, to this day your mother's grave and her memory are honored by all of us." He embraced her in a long, sobbing hug. Then he continued, "You must come to Africa to see, because your mother is the most famous person in our history." In time that is exactly what Aggie and her husband did. They were welcomed by cheering throngs of villagers... She even met the man who had been hired by her father many years before to carry her back down the mountain in a hammock-cradle. The most dramatic moment, of course, was when the pastor escorted Aggie to see her mother's white cross for herself. She knelt in the soil to pray and give thanks. Later that day, in the church, the pastor read from John 12:24: "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." He then followed with Psalm 126:5: "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy."

One of the fruits of the Spirit is LONGSUFFERING. Sometimes we do not understand why we meet trials and difficulties. We may even be tempted to feel angry against God because we do not see the full picture. But we need to realise that God is in control, and if we are patient God will eventually show us the whole picture and we will get our reward.



The fruit of the Spirit is GENTLENESS

"Your gentleness has made me great."

Psalm 18:35

Far, far back in time there was a little girl that was living happily with her family in the land of Israel. We don't know her name, so let us call her Tamar. Tamar was blessed with a mother and father who loved her. From early childhood they would teach their little daughter about God, the Creator of all things. She would sit on her mothers lap at dawn and they would blend their voices with the birds in praises to the Almighty God. Enraptured she would listen to the stories of the Holy Scriptures - about how God created the world, and how He upholds it with His power. She loved to hear about the heroes of faith. Her imagination would follow Joseph as he was sold as a slave to a foreign land - by his own brothers! It was like she could enter into his emotions as he sat there on the camel being led further

and further away from his beloved father's house. Mum told her that in that very moment, when everything seemed to fall apart in his life, Josef determined not to give up his faith in God - He determined to be faithful no matter what. She had always admired him for that decision and wondered if she would be as brave if she would face a similar situation.

One day something terrible happened that put her to the test. One of the neighbouring nations invaded her country, they would rush through in companies, robbing both cattle, crops and even people. She was a ever ready helper in the family and would always be ready to fill her task, whether it was looking after the cattle or getting water or wood. This fatal day she seemed to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. Before she could even think twice she was on her way to a foreign land - as a slave - just like Joseph.

Inside her a battle was raging. Her emotions told her to just give up everything, but the education she had got from her early childhood had given her a strong faith, and she determined to be strong and carry the light of Jesus wherever she went. God, the Creator of heaven and earth was in control. He was not ignorant of her seemingly hopeless situation.

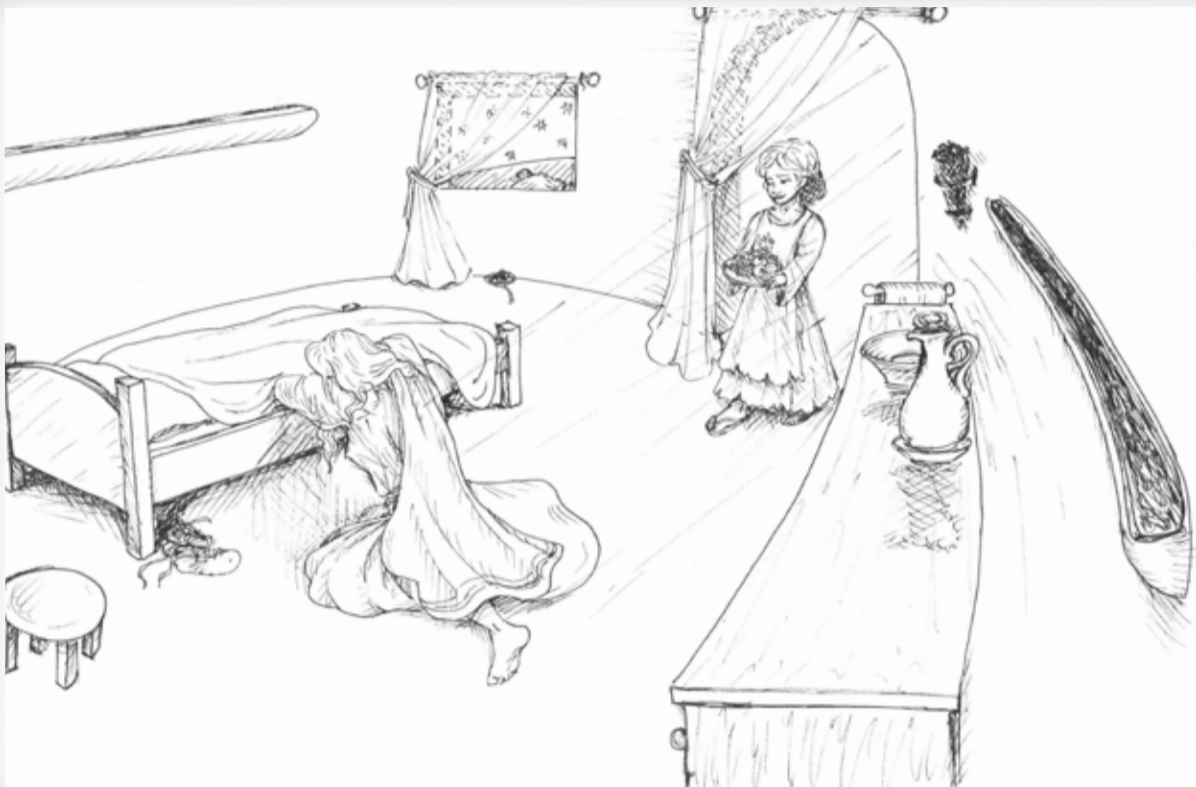
After a long and stressful journey they eventually arrived in Syria. She was sold as a slave to the captain of the Syrian army. How could she ever get herself to serve him that has been in charge of invading her country? The tempting, discouraging thoughts pressed hard on her, but she refused to give in. I will be a light for Jesus. I am not to allow circumstances to master me!, she determined.

She had a gentle servant's heart, and would respond with joy when she was asked by the wife of the captain to help. She would do her work with respect and thoroughness, and soon the captains wife got to love this girl that was a personification of gentleness. She trusted her and she would even seek her counsel.

One day they got some sad news. The captain had been diagnosed with leprosy - the most dreaded sickness at that time, since there was no known cure. The wife was crying - she knew that she had to be separated from her husband for ever, for this sickness was so contagious that even a king would be abandoned if he was hit by it. Now the little girl saw her opportunity. She had always been faithful to her creator God - even when the officer and his wife would bow down before idols or worship the spirits, she would refuse. She would use every opportunity to witness about God in heaven. And now was her chance to prove to them the power of her God. She remembered the prophet in Israel - he had been chosen and anointed of God and the power of the Almighty was upon him. God had worked through him to heal and do many mighty miracles. Now she threw her arms around the sorrowing wife of the officer, and assured her that the creator God had not forgotten them. -He has restoring as well as creating power, she claimed, and encouraged them to visit the true prophet of the Lord in Israel.

The girl must have made a great impression on both the officer and his wife. Usually an officer would not have his little maid as a counsellor - especially not when she claimed another religion. But at the recommendation of the little servant girl, he took the journey to find the prophet - and the wonderful end of that encounter was that as he promptly obeyed the commands of God, He was miraculously healed from his terrible skin disease. And he was so impressed by the little maids example and the power of the true God that he decided with all his family to be His follower as well.

Boys and girls - the fruit of the spirit is gentleness! By faithfully and lovingly fulfilling your humble tasks you may be counted as a hero in the eyes of Jesus. A heart subdued with the love of Jesus and joyfully fulfilling the duties of life is a winning, mighty argument. Without even being aware of it, you may by your gentle, transformed nature lead other people to Christ.



The fruit of the Spirit is **GOODNESS**

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."
Psalms 23:6

Once upon a time there was a little girl - let us call her Mary. She was a happy girl. She was living in a beautiful house, and had loving, caring parents. One day they wanted to surprise their daughter. Mary had always wanted to have a little baby doll. She loved to care for babies, but didn't have any siblings herself. Last time she was in town with her mum, she had seen this beautiful doll that looked like a real baby girl. Mary had learnt not to covet, and she refrained from begging, but she couldn't help exclaiming: Oh, what a sweet little baby doll!

Mum and dad were so thankful for their daughter, her helpfulness, tender heart and willingness to do what is right. In a tangible way they wanted to show Mary that obedience brings reward. And so they decided to buy the doll. Oh, you can imagine the joy of Mary as she opened the surprise package! She radiated like a sunbeam, and gave mum and dad a big hug. My doll shall be called Theodora

- that means gift of God!

Mary couldn't wait to take her little baby for a walk. She had got this little push wagon from aunt Esther, and she carefully laid her precious Theodora in it. With a smile mum saw her daughter off. -Just be careful, she reminded her, sometime the big trucks can pass by quite carelessly.

Mary felt like a proud young mother as she walked down the street with her push wagon. She passed by the old factory, and rounded the corner where the Smiths lived. She remembered mum had taken her to visit this family a few years back. They had brought some clothes and a basket of fruits from the garden. Mum had told her how Mr. Smith had lost his job, and that the family had had a tough time. They had 5 kids, and one of the daughters was the age of Mary. She remembered the joy that filled her as she saw the kids jumping and dancing of joy. She remembered the warm glow of compassion and love as she saw the weak, meagre mother bowing in thankfulness to God.

Suddenly she was shaken out of her dreams. She heard the shy whisper of a girl just behind her: -Hi, Mary! It was the daughter of the Smiths! -Hi Rachel, Mary exclaimed, I was just thinking of you! Do you remember that I visited you with my mum that time when we brought you the clothes and the fruits? -And the doll! Rachel added and looked down with a shy smile. She proudly held something to her chest. At first it looked like a dirty rag, but as Mary looked closer it was a doll - and now she remembered that they had added some used toys to the gift package.

In the next moment something terrible happened. A truck came racing down the street - carelessly, and just in the wrong moment, out of pure shock, little Rachel tripped and lost her precious doll. The truck had nearly hit the girl. She was just able to escape. But as the truck raced on, it left behind some squeezed fabrics and glazed bits from a once pretty doll face. Rachel was crushed. This was one of her few possessions in life - her joy and pride. Mary stood as paralyzed watching the scene. The poor, little girl covered with tears holding the broken pieces of her beloved doll. No way could that doll ever be restored!

Thoughts were rushing through the head of Mary. She fought. An inner battle was raging. It was like one voice encouraged her: 'Take your Theodora and give it to the poor girl', but then another voice argued: 'Don't be stupid - that's your new, precious doll, keep her for yourself. After all it was a gift, and it's the

fault of Rachel that she lost hers.' A phrase came running through her mind: What would Jesus do? And then a Bible verse followed: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good" Acts 10:38

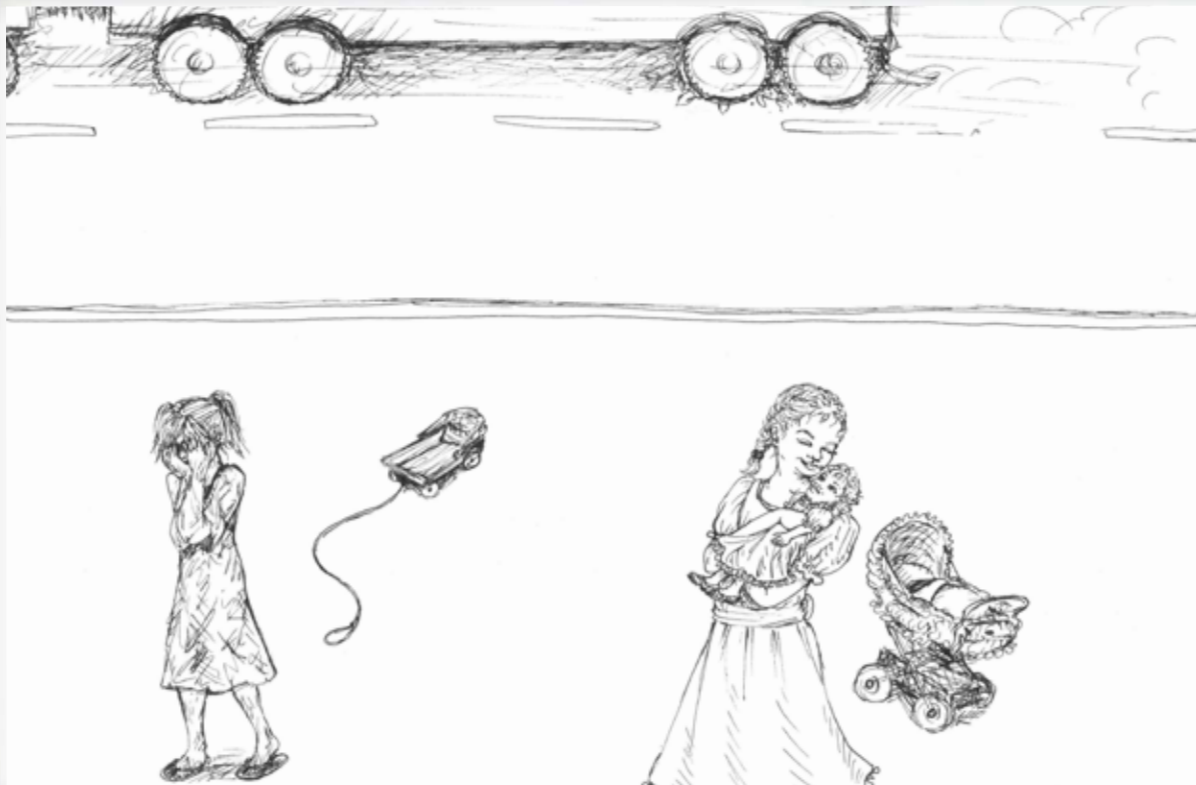
Jesus went about doing good. He would think more about others than of Himself. -I want to be like Jesus, she confirmed to herself half loud. Resolutely she took Theodora out of the push wagon and walked over to Rachel who still was blinded by tears. She threw her arm around her, gently placing Theodora in her hands, whispering: Don't be sad, this is a gift of God - my own Theodora is yours now!

Mary was afraid she would regret her firm decision if she would linger any longer, so she hurriedly turned around and ran towards the house. Casting a look behind, she could see Rachel holding Theodora up, beaming with joy. As she reached the doorsteps, she was almost out of breath. She paused for a moment, wondering what she would tell mum and dad as she came back without her precious new gift. She determined to tell the story just as it was, and in her heart she prayed they would understand.

Mum and dad were surprised - but proudly surprised by their daughter's decision. And Mary felt such a deep joy in her heart. Not for one moment did she regret giving away her beloved doll. In her dreams she would see the bright smile of little Rachel.

The whole episode down at the street had not gone by unnoticed, though. A rich lady were living just across the street, and she had seen the goodness of little Mary. It had touched her to the depths of her heart, and she determined to reward such a generous behaviour.

The next day Mary heard a knock on the door. She ran down, and there stood a fine lady she had never seen. Under her arm she had a little box. -This one is for the generous little girl who gave away her pretty new doll yesterday, the lady smiled. Mary stood with open mouth. She opened the lid, and she could hardly believe her own eyes: Theodora! She exclaimed. Yes, the lady replied: Goodness always returns. And even if your kind deed would never have been recognised nor rewarded in this life, your heavenly Father would have written it in His memory book and given you an eternal reward.



The fruit of the Spirit is FAITH

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Hebrews 11:1

Ruth grew up in a missionary family. From her childhood she had been taught to pray and trust in God. Mum and dad would tell her about the heroes of faith and read the incredible promises in the Bible: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed... nothing shall be impossible unto you." (Matthew 17:20) "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." (Matthew 21:22)

One day the faith of the little missionary family was tested. Usually the mission station was beautifully surrounded by bushes, plants and bright coloured flowers. In the distance they could see green and golden fields of corn and sugar-canes. The cows, sheep and goats would be grassing just out-

side the gate, and the kids would be playing in the green woods. But now it had not been raining for months. In fact, they had never experienced such a long drought. The nature looked sad. The flowers were fading and the plants hung their heads. The fields were turning brown, and the cattle were suffering. The leaves were falling from the trees. Ruth was sad as she saw small children, young lambs and weak calves suffer. The mission station had a good well, and they had been able to help some of the villagers getting enough water to survive. But this one fatal day, the well to their great astonishment and disappointment was completely dry.

What should they do? Their small supply of water would be finished in a day or two, and the family agreed to earnestly pray that the rain season would come in time. But the first day passed and no clouds appeared in the sky. The second day came - cloudless with just as scourging heat. Dad was worried.

As Ruth lay in bed that evening, praying and contemplating the whole situation, a bright thought suddenly came to her mind: Why wait for the rain? Couldn't God bring water into the well without any clouds? The more Ruth contemplated her new idea, the more excited she became. She recited the wonderful promises she had learnt, and faith grew in her heart. In her mind it was already a reality, and she almost couldn't wait to check the well in the morning.

The next morning Ruth woke up early. The same thought she had fallen asleep with was fresh in her mind. As usually, she knelt in her bed, saying her morning prayer. This time it was rather a prayer of praise full of expectation than earnest and anxious begging. She slipped into her sandals, and ran out the door. It was still slightly dark, and she almost stumbled as she made her way down the stony path. She gazed into the dark hole. It was deep - impossible to see the bottom - but a little stone would give her the evidence she was looking for. She took one of the

pebbles and threw it into the deep well that had been completely dry for the last two days. She held her breath in excitement and joyful anticipation until she heard the expected SPLASH! Full of praise and jumping of joy she skipped and danced all the way back to the house. She ran into her parent's room, crying: There's water in the well, there's water in the well!

Mum and dad just looked at her with a mix of doubt and faith. Dad peeked through the window, gazing at the far horizon - as cloudless as ever. "Calm down, my little daughter", he said, "there is still not any sign of rain, and you know that the well wouldn't fill up from a cloudless sky - I think you must have had an exciting dream"... "No, no", Ruth protested, "God has done a miracle. I claimed His promises and He has sent water without any cloud!" Mum and dad still looked a bit disillusioned, so Ruth asked them to join her down to the well that they might see and hear and taste the proof themselves. As the pebble reached the water surface and made a sounding SPLASH, tears ran down mum's cheeks and dad grabbed His little daughter and gave her a big hug. "Praise God for your firm faith!" he exclaimed, "God has proved His promise true: All things are possible to them that believe! Your faith has saved the lives of many. Praise God!"

Faith is listed as a part of the fruit of the Spirit. Without faith we can never be saved. The Bible says that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. We cannot see God, but through the eye of faith we may know that He is there. God has revealed Himself through the Bible, and every promise may be a reality in our lives when we claim them in faith. Faith is one of the conditions given that we may have our prayers answered (James 1:6-7). Other conditions are that we pray according to Gods will and that we do not hold on to sins in our lives that may separate us from God (1. John 5:14; Psalm 66:18).



The fruit of the Spirit is **MEEKNESS**

"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom."

James 3:13

Some years back it was very hard to be a Christian in certain of the eastern European countries. The government had a hard hand on the people, and religion was banned. The laws of the country forbade the publishing of Christian literature. But some people refused to let themselves be ruled by the laws of man. Just before Jesus Christ left this earth to go back to heaven to prepare a home for us, He gave the commission to spread the gospel - the good news of salvation - to all the world (Matthew 28:18-20). "We ought to obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29), Peter once replied as he was threatened to stop preaching about His crucified, risen and soon coming Saviour.

There was a man living in Romania during these tough times, let us call him Emilian. Emilian had a burden to publish and spread the good news of the gospel. He knew it was a dangerous task, and

he was risking his freedom, yes even his life in doing so. But Emilian was so filled with a passion for Gods Holy Word that he would not let anything stop him. But he had to do it all in secret.

Weeks passed - and months. Emilian was so thankful that his little ministry had not yet been discovered by the authorities. But one fatal day there was a knock on the door. Somehow something had caused suspicion. He wouldn't lie, and there was a house search. Unlawful activity was discovered, and Emilian was immediately taken captive. They treated him badly, but Emilian would not cause one fretful or unkind word to pass from his lips. He was thinking of his Master. In the Bible Jesus is pictured as a lamb being brought to the slaughter, and it says that He did not open His mouth (Isaiah 53:7). Imagine what Jesus had to go through for my sake, Emilian thought. He was pure, he was innocent - and yet they beat Him, scourged Him and eventually brought Him to the terrible death of the cross. He was meek as a lamb - I want to reflect my Master - oh, Lord, may it be evident that I reflect your meekness!

Emilian was brought to the prison. He was thrown into this dark, damp cell. -Now we'll see what this God of yours is good for, the officer screamed. We'll feed you on water and be sure that you will turn out as another skeleton of a criminal. Emilian patiently smiled with forbearance. -Poor man, he thought, he doesn't know the power of God! Humbly he prayed that the Lord for the sake of His own glory would manifest His redeeming power. And so he waited, and eventually he fell asleep.

Suddenly he woke up by a strange sound from the corner of the cell. -Mjau, mjau... it sounded like a cat! And sure enough - squeezing through the barred window came a beautiful little cat. -My God, Emilian exclaimed, the cat has a slice of bread in her mouth! He would never have expected that his prayer would be answered in such an amazing way - what a creative God he was serving, this was almost like the ravens feeding the prophet Elijah!

He thankfully took the slice of bread - good, nutritious bread satisfying his rumbling stomach and aching hunger. The day passed, and having nothing else to do, Emilian spent the time in prayer and contemplation. The picture of the Lamb of God meekly enduring the wrath and cruelty of His own creators often

came to his mind. Through his imagination he saw his Saviour hanging on the cross, praying for His executors. And Emilian started praying for the salvation of the hard, cold-hearted officer. He wondered how long he would let him stay in this damp prison without even feeding him a crumble of bread.

Early in the morning a sound caught his slumbering ear - it came from the corner of the prison cell: Mjau! Emilian sat up in amazement, exclaiming: The cat! As a faithful servant the cat pressed through the iron bars, gently holding a piece of bread in her mouth. Emilian smiled. -Thank you Lord for sending this faithful mistress feeding me every morning!

And so the days passed - the weeks passed, every morning the little cat would faithfully be at her post. Then one early morning, Emilian heard firm steps outside his prison cell. The officer jerked the door open: So, how is the believing skeleton... he said scornfully, stopping midway his sentence. As his eyes were accustomed to the darkness he gazed with open mouth at Emilian. He didn't look like a skeleton after weeks of starvation - indeed he looked happy and satisfied. The officer was speechless. Thanks, mr. officer - I am doing very well, he eventually replied, as he saw the officer recovering from his first chock. My God has cared for me in an amazing way... and just as he said those words, a sound was heard from the corner of the prison cell. What do you think it was? Mjau, mjau - and in through the iron bars a beautiful little cat slipped, gently holding a piece of bread in her mouth. The eyes of the officer grew big: This is MY cat, he exclaimed, I never figured out why we used so much bread the last week! Emilian responded with a smile: My God, the creator of all things, sent her to feed me faithfully every single day. The officer struggled, his hardness melted, and broken down with contrition he confessed: I never saw such a meek prisoner, you would never complain or retaliate. There must be a God in heaven and I can see Him through you. I also want to follow that God, I long to shine with His meekness.

We will all experience offences. We will all experience annoyances and injustice. But bearing in us the meekness of Jesus our Saviour will keep us from uttering fretful words, impatient words and unkind deeds. Let Jesus be seen through you!



The fruit of the Spirit is **TEMPERANCE**

"And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown."
1 Corinthians 9:25

Long time ago there was a boy called Daniel. He lived peacefully in a beautiful city called Jerusalem. Daniel had three very good friends, and together they would have a lot of fun. But what they enjoyed most was to listen to the exciting stories of the Holy Scriptures. When they listened to the law being read, it was like God spoke to them from heaven. He spoke like a loving, protecting Father. Daniel and his friends knew that God was their Creator and Friend. They had full trust that when He told them something through His Word, He knew why, and it would serve their own good to follow His instruction. God always blesses prompt and loving obedience!

Jerusalem was fenced with big walls. Watchmen would be placed on different posts on the walls. They would always be on guard for any attack. Usually they would cry out: All well! The people in the city got used to the monotone cries of the watchmen - morning, midday and noon.

But one day there was a stir on the wall, and the frightening words "an enemy is approaching" went from watchman to watchman all over the wall. The gates were closed and bolted. Soldiers filled the streets, preparing for an attack. Jerusalem was a strong city, but eventually the enemy was able to break through. Daniel and his three friends were taken captive. Their hands were chained together and they were commanded to march - march all the way to the foreign country of Babylon.

After days of walking in the desert, their feet started to become really sore, they were dead tired and longed for some refreshing water, a substantial meal and a pillow to rest their heads, but they had to move on...

At last the cry was heard: Babylon, we are nearing Babylon! Babylon was the name of the city they were heading towards. What would meet them in this foreign country? Would they be thrown into prison, or would they be sold as slaves?

Daniel and his friends were amazed with the treatment that met them. They got a refreshing bath, and new, local clothes were given them. Then they were led into a magnificent, big hall. A beautiful table was arranged in the middle of the hall, filled with all

kinds of costly food from the king himself. This was an overwhelming courtesy shown by the king to poor captives! But alas - what kind of food was before them? This was the very food and drink God in His holy Word had proclaimed unclean - swine flesh and intoxicating wine! They could never partake of these things and have the blessing of the Lord. But how could they deny such a courtesy? Wouldn't that cause the king to become furious? Daniel resolutely refused to counsel the consequences. He was determined, purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. He needed a clear mind and a strong body to handle all the challenges that would meet him in this new country - and he would not trade the blessing of the Lord for anything.

Daniel and his friends exercised self-control, temperance - one of the fruits of the Spirit. And the Lord blessed them abundantly. The chef agreed to let them go on a vegetarian diet together with just pure water to test them for 10 days. And after those 10 days there was no doubt who was the most healthy and strong. Daniel and his friends were much better in shape both in body and mind, and they were allowed to continue their diet. Eventually they were brought before the king, he tested them and proclaimed them to be 10 times wiser than even the wise men in Babylon! "Those who honour Me I will honour", Jesus says (1. Samuel 2:30). He also tells us that we are like His temple - He has entrusted this body to use to care well for (1 Cor. 6:19-20). We are to keep it pure, and by eating and drinking to His glory, we may keep strong and wise to serve Him in a mighty way (1. Cor. 10:31)!



Against such there is no law...

"If you
love Me,
keep My
command-
ments."

John 14:15

When we live out the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, the holy law of God will not condemn us - for we live in harmony with it. The holy law of God expresses what God is like and what He wants us to be like. You can read the Ten Commandments in Exodus chapter 20. Let us look at what this wall of protection is all about:

1. Jesus says: If you love Me, you won't have any other Gods before Me. He is the only true God and He cares for His creatures. But did you know that we can break this commandment while still professing to believe in God? Actually everything in life that we place before God, takes His place and becomes an idol. You may

think about what that could be in your life - it can be music-stars, sport-stars - or even yourself and your possessions, if you neglect the things of God for carnal and worldly amusements.

2 Jesus says: If you love Me, you won't make images to worship. All through history people have wanted something tangible and visible to worship - and so different statues have been made of saints and even Mary or Christ. Others use amulets to give them luck in life. But all these things take the place of the real Christ, who we are going to behold with the eye of faith. The Word of God reveals Him!

3. Jesus says: If you love Me, you won't take My name in vain. Have you ever been swearing? Have you ever taken the name of God lightly upon your lips? God's name is holy, and is not to be uttered lightly or repeated unnecessarily.



4. Jesus says: If you love Me, you will remember and keep holy the 7th day Sabbath. No wonder Jesus said 'remember' - for sure He foresaw that this would be a commandment that would be forgotten. The Sabbath was introduced from the very beginning in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:2-3). Jesus even says the Sabbath is like a sign between Him and His people (Ezek. 20:12,20). The devil has directed a massive attack on Gods special sign - the day of worship has been changed as the prophecies of the Bible predicted (Dan. 7:25). Today most people are worshipping on the day of the Sun (Sunday, the 1st day in the Bible), rather than the day of the Son (Saturday, the 7th day in the Bible). Jesus calls us back to true worship!

5. Jesus says: If you love Me, you will respect and honour our parents. In the New Testament Paul lists disobedience to parents as one of the signs of the last days (2. Tim. 3:1-5). Try to lighten the burdens of your parents. If you have a mother and father that love the Lord, you are privileged - they are your best earthly counsellors!

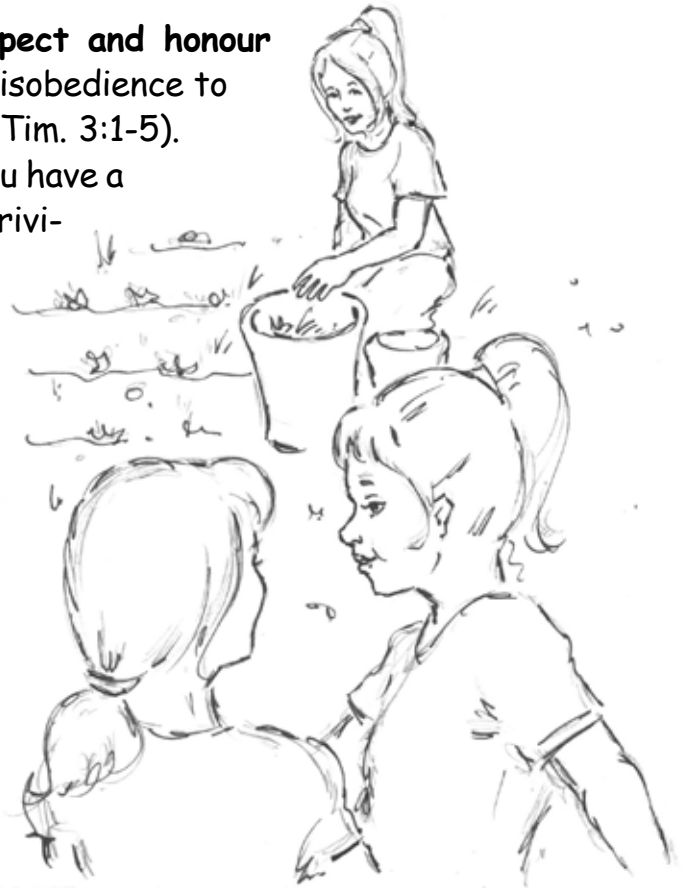
6. Jesus says: If you love Me, you won't kill. You may say: I would never kill anybody! But have you ever been angry at someone and said hurting things? Then you may kill something inside a person, and God looks at that as murder. Jesus told that in the New Testament (Matt. 5:21-24).

7. Jesus says: If you love Me, you won't commit adultery. The devil has really attacked this point! There are so many divorces and many children are suffering in split families. Many young people do not believe that you have to marry before you have an intimate relationship. They even flirt with this one and that one - giving their heart and their feelings away. Let God lead! As He laid Adam to sleep and gave him Eve, God may also have one prepared for you if you rest in His plan.

8. Jesus says: If you love Me, you won't steal. There are many things you can steal - things, but also feelings, attention and so on. Time, money and talents you may steal from God. You belong to God - you are His steward. He has entrusted to you a certain amount. Use it to His glory - otherwise you are robbing God.

9. Jesus says: If you love Me, you won't bear false witness. This can be done by words, but also by your body language. Don't try to bring a situation in a false light - it will never pay to lie in order to escape a tricky situation. Never try to come forward yourself by pressing others down.

10. Jesus says: If you love Me, you won't envy. It will never bring you any joy to complain in your heart and harbour unsatisfied feelings. It may be true that others have more in life. But joy is not measured in things. What did Christ have here on earth? What about Paul? We will be most happy if we follow the counsel of Paul 'ever to be content' (Phil. 4:11)!



The works of the flesh...

“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

Galatians 5:16

The Bible tells us that in contrast to the fruit of the Spirit, we have the works of the flesh. This is the things we would naturally do if we do not have Jesus in our heart. It's just like a field - if you do not cultivate it, it will naturally produce weeds. Having a beautiful garden with useful vegetables takes an effort - you need to put a lot of time and care into it. We need to allow Jesus to weed away all the bad 'weeds' from our lives.

The Holy Spirit speaks to us and calls us to be loving, have joy, peace, patience and all the other beautiful traits of character. The Devil tries to pull us away from Jesus. He whispers in our ear that if somebody has hurt us, we are allowed to feel angry and take revenge. He whispers in our ear that it is

not that bad to take a thing which is not ours - after all you need it more than them, he argues deceivingly. He whispers that you can better lie to get yourself out of a bad situation, and he tempts you to murmur, be stubborn and disobedient when mum and dad ask you to help.

By committing the works of the flesh we sin. To sin means to break God's law (1. John. 3:4), and eventually we will have to pay if we stubbornly continue in that same path. All people have sinned, and the Bible says that sin leads to death - eternal death (Rom. 3:23; Rom. 6:23). So all people should actually die. But praise God, Jesus gave His life for us and He offers us pardon and power to live a life of victory (1. John 2:1-2).

On the other side of the page you will find an imaginary story of a two children. Unfortunately they have not allowed the fruit of the Spirit to grow in their lives, and so the deeds of the flesh are continually seen. Each time one of the commandments are broken in the story, you can write the number of the commandments in the circle beside - and you will see how easily one sin leads to another, until all the commandments are broken. Actually the law is one unit, so the Bible even says that if you break one commandment, you have broken all (James 2:10). It is impossible to keep on to some 'small' cherished sin and still have Jesus as King of our lives. Jesus can never share a divided heart. By sinning we actually choose for the Devil - we take his side in the great battle.

Many times our breaking of the law is not even visible - a lot takes place in our heart or mind (Matt. 5:17-48). That's why Jesus said He wanted to create a new heart in us (Ezek. 36:26-27). When we repent, ask forgiveness and invite Jesus into our lives, we can have a new start, and Jesus has promised to protect us and keep us from falling (Jude 1:24-25). Then we can have joy and peace!

Mary and John grew up in the same village, but came from very different homes. Mary's parents were strongly religious, while John's parents didn't believe in God.

John had heard about God but he didn't have any interest - his big interest was football, and this seemed to absorb all his thoughts and time. He dreamed of being a famous football player.

Mary came from a stern, religious home, but she never read her Bible - she was afraid of God, and would rather pray to the statue they had at home of Virgin Mary.

John didn't go to church at all - for him every day was the same. Mary went with her parents to mass every Sunday.

John's parents were divorced when he was still a toddler. Mary's parents thought divorce was a terrible sin, but they didn't have a very happy marriage. They would often quarrel and say angry and hurting words to each other.

One day John was out playing football with his friends. Mary also wanted to play with her friends, but mum had told that she needed her help in the kitchen. Besides, mum told her daughter that the sun was about to set, and she didn't want her daughter to be out after it was dark. But as mum went out to get something at the market, Mary sneaked out of the house.

It was dark, but she found her way to her friend Anna's home. The family seemed to be gone, there was no sign of life in the house. Suddenly her eyes fell on the chair by the door - Anna's beautiful doll! She had envied that doll so much. Now she saw her opportunity: She quickly grabbed the doll. -Lucky me, she thought, I was just in time. But rather than joy, she felt fear in her heart - she had to hide the doll as soon as possible!

And so she ran home, hoping she would reach back before her mum came back from the market. She just managed to hide away the doll, before she met her mother's searching eyes. She stood in the entrance, and it was like she could 'smell' something was wrong: "Did you go anywhere when I was gone?", she inquired. "No, no - I was here all the time", Mary answered coldly. "Please don't lie", mum pressed. "No, for God's sake - I don't lie", Mary screamed...



The way of disobedience never brings joy and peace. Let Jesus enter your heart! He will bring with Him all the fruits of the Spirit - those fruits that will make this life much sweeter and will give you hope of an eternal life with Jesus in Heaven!