

Connect Group Studies



'Bringing God and people together'

People Skills in the Kingdom of God

Books like *How to Win Friends and Influence People* are popular because we all want to be liked. Our parents and friends let us know we are accepted when we behave in a pleasing way. It's more of a challenge to respond well to difficult people and bad circumstances.

When you became a Christian you were given the potential for a personality that everyone likes. It is the fruit of the Spirit.

Read the list in **Galatians 5:22-23** *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."*

These things do not naturally come out of our own spirit, They are from God's Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is a list of the qualities of **His** personality.

Q: Did you start showing all those qualities as soon as you were saved?

Q: We know we have been given a new nature, including all that. Why don't we automatically do those good things?

Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 say that we have to **put on** the new nature. We have to deliberately choose to act out the fruit of the Spirit God has put in us.

Read Philippians 2:12 *"Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. **Work** hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear."*

Another version says "**Work out**" your salvation. Just as we develop muscles doing a regular work-out at the gym, we have to exercise to develop spiritual muscle, so that we have strength to deal with people in a godly way.

Q: How do you react when you don't get your own way? Does love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control automatically pop up for you?

We often react out of old hurts in ways that are far from loving. But God gives us plenty of chances to practice and get stronger in our discipline to do things His way.

Read Romans 7:14-15 *"So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate."*

Q: Do you have that problem too? How does that make you feel?

In Matthew 19 Jesus talked about 'continually keeping the commandments' and 'being perfect' as if they were requirements or achievable goals. **Read Matthew 19:25-26** *"When the disciples heard this, they were utterly puzzled, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus looked at them and said, With men this is impossible, but all things are possible with God."*

Read Matthew 11:28-30 *Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."*

Q: How can we work-out (Philippians 2:12) and rest (Matthew 11:28) at the same time?

Unbelievers try to be good, in and of themselves, but it's hard work....and doesn't work. If we believe what Jesus said, "There is only One who is good." (Matthew 19:17), then we must **give up trying to be good**. That sounds like a contradiction doesn't it? But the solution is simple.

We must ask Him to produce His goodness in us, for us, through us.

Look back at Philippians 2 again. This time **read Philippians 2:13** *"For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."*

Q: Remembering what Paul said in Romans 7 about failing to do what he knew was right. Do you think you have become a better person since becoming a Christian?

Read what Paul said about himself near the end of his life. **1 Timothy 1:15** *This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I am the worst of them all.*

Christians are still sinners, we cannot perfect ourselves. Remember: it is not our job to be loving and kind, it is the Holy Spirit's job. Our job is to ask him to be loving and kind for us, in us, through us.

Here's a good challenge for you: **Read Philippians 2:14** *"Do everything without complaining and arguing."*

In his famous book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, the first thing Dale Carnegie put on the list of Fundamental Techniques in Handling People is: Don't criticize, condemn or complain. (But the Bible said it before him.)

To achieve this you will need to pray immediately, every time something irritates you.

Pray something like this: Father God, you know how I feel about what just happened. I feel angry, please forgive me. Wash those feelings away. I don't feel like being kind to that person, heal my hurts. I can't do any better. You come and be patience and kindness and goodness in me, through me, for me, by your Holy Spirit, in Jesus name. Amen.