

The Christmas Fruit

A 12 Days of Christmas Journey

Through the Gifts God Gives Us to Give Others



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Introduction

MANY YEARS AGO, THE GIFT OF FRUIT AT CHRISTMAS WAS AN EXOTIC TREAT since you couldn't simply go to the store and get virtually any kind of produce at the least winter's whim. Today, the tradition continues with people gifting *special* varieties of fruits that continue to have limited growing seasons.

One year, a member at the church I was serving at sent me an unusual variety of pears that were delicious but unavailable outside of reserving a gift basket ahead of Christmas. Others, like clementines, are more common, but still available for a limited time. No amount of willing on my part will bring either one of those pears or those orange hybrids to me out of season.

How appropriate that we give fruit like that for Christmas, because the day we remember that God came into the World also points us to how He gives us the gift of *spiritual fruit* we can share with those around us. Like those Christmas gifts of fruit, I am incapable of simply deciding "I want to be fruitful" and bringing these fruits to full ripeness, but by God's grace, we can turn to the one born in Bethlehem and He empowers us to be people who bless others with fruit from Him.

As we give gifts small or large, simple or snazzy, this Christmas, let's take some time to think about the ways God gifts us to give the best sorts of gifts to others: gifts that reflect His love, the love that is the centerpiece of Christmas hope.

Each time we go on a Twelve Days of Christmas journey together, it is such a blessing to me to share it with you. I love taking this time to pause and reflect on what Christmas is truly about and how we take the best of that one day and carry it long beyond December 25. I hope that this devotional likewise blesses you and that as we begin the next year, we can all show fruit from the Savior to each other and everyone who needs it in this hurting world.

Timothy Butler
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Part I



The Heart of Christmas

Day 1: Love

“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.”

– 1 John 4:8-9

God’s fruit He begins in our lives exactly at the epicenter of Christmas: love.

Love is what we find on Christmas Day. After all, if God wasn’t Love, then He could have wiped us out and made better humans who did what was right. Instead, He did only the second half: He came into the world to live truly as the perfect Human being, the first human to really do what is right, but *without getting rid of us*.

We human beings don’t tend to work this way. It always makes me sad when I drive across an old highway bridge and see them building a new one right next to it. No matter how many memories of travels people have across it “over the river and through the woods” to Christmas celebrations, it ages to a certain point and it is more efficient to destroy it and replace it than to repair the well-worn bridge.

In Romans 5, Paul writes about God’s different way. Though he could have built the new bridge and destroyed us, He did something only God could do. Jesus came as a “second Adam” who, by coming into the destructive realm of sin, brought restoration as fully as we brought sin (1 Corinthians 15:45). Can you imagine if we could all create new things and by extension the old wouldn’t be replaced but brought back to better than new condition? That’s the power of God’s love.

When we remember that Christmas is first and foremost the proclamation of God’s love, and our hope is rooted in how God’s love restores us, it reminds us that our duty is first and foremost to *show* that love. As we look to the new year that begins next week, let’s pray that God uses us in it to make people think of His Church as a people who love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).

PRAYER: *Father, we so often fail to show love, even at Christmastime. Please help us to be a people of love this season and in the year to come. Help us to love so well that those around us want to know more about you because they want to know how we can be so loving. We pray this in Jesus’s name. Amen.*

Day 2: Joy

"...and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant."

– Luke 1:47-48

A few months ago, I drove by a scenic place that was partially obscured by scaffolding for reasons that were entirely unclear to me. The scaffolding went around an already nice decorative sculpture and I couldn't imagine what else might go there. "Oh, I hope they aren't going to mess up this beautiful place." Passing by again more recently, a huge set of beautiful Christmas candles had been erected.

In reflecting on the news that she would be the mother of the Messiah, Mary says her soul rejoices. That doesn't mean she thinks everything is going to be easy. Mary knows better. But she sees God's plan. She can't necessarily see past the scaffolding, but she (unlike me) *rejoices* because she has confidence in the one doing the building.

There's an awful lot of times in life we see the scaffolding and despair. *Look at that ugly scaffolding! What are they going to do to this place?* Christmastime can bring out the scaffolding in our situations, amplifying it in times spent with family and friends. We see all the things that aren't as we'd hoped, or we know they should be, and the situation feels hopeless. We hear the Christmas carols, but the joy feels distant.

In those moments, we need to remember that the God who came into the world is the God who cares enough about us that, well, *He came into the world*. The scaffolding we see can be understood to have meaning, too. As we can't quite understand what God is doing in our lives, may we see scaffolding. As we wonder about the lives of our loved ones and even those fellow believers we are less close to or even drive us crazy, may we see God's scaffolding towards making all things new in Jesus.

As we start to trust that God is the true master builder, we can exude joy. Not just fleeting happiness, but something deeper and more lasting because we know that what is not yet complete *will* be completed and made right. And as we show joy, we can share it with all those around us who are wondering the same things and need that joy as much as we do.

PRAYER: *As I celebrate your birth, Jesus, and how you have shown your love to me, I get distracted and miss out on true joy. Please help me to see beyond the scaffolding and have a joyful expectation of the beautiful plan you are unfolding. I ask this in your name. Amen.*

Day 3: Peace

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

– Luke 2:14

Jesus came to bring peace. When the angels declared His birth, they gave glory to God and then declared His peace. There are a lot of things people might say they think of when they think of Christians, but is “peace” at the top? Like love and joy, peace is at the heart of the Christmas miracle.

Humanity tries to achieve peace through worldly means. If only I had enough success, I would feel peace and could give peace to my loved ones. If only we could pass a particular piece of legislation, there would be greater peace throughout society. Indeed, not worrying about finances might offer something that feels like peace and changing laws might bring less discord, at least to a particular part of society. These aren’t necessarily bad things when we understand the limits of what we are doing, but these things are not *peace*.

We end up in a better financial place only to find new ways to worry about managing those finances and to discover just how many of our problems are unimproved by having a better grasp on our money. A piece of legislation passes, and it stirs up new discord worse than the old, creating problems well beyond what we hoped would be solved. Even our best attempts only approximate the peace God gives. When all our attempts fail, we finally face the painful fact that we cannot reach peace on our own. At best, we can offer a cessation of hostilities, a break from the constant agitation we see in every segment of our lives.

As Jesus was about to send out His disciples, what did He say to them? “Peace be with you” (John 20:21). The ancient Christian greeting has echoed “Peace be with you” with the response “And also with you.” As followers of Jesus, we always find ourselves going out into a world that is not at all peaceful, but we live in that world as bearers of Jesus’s peace.

The world gets angry, the world breaks things. But the Savior restores and heals and sends us to offer His healing to those He places in our paths. We aren’t called to a false peace, but we are called to bring restoration and healing. As God remakes us to what we should be, He wants us to be those who help others to reach the fullness of who He made them to be too. To experience, truly and fully, peace.

PRAYER: Holy Spirit, in a world with so much anger and discord, help me to instead show peace. When things are unended, help me not to trust in the solutions I can scheme, but in the healing power that comes only through you. I ask this in Jesus’s name. Amen.

Part II



Neighborly Gifts

Day 4: Patience

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

– 2 Peter 3:9

Many of us have the experience during the Christmas season of a package showing up and feeling a sense of dread: someone we didn't even have on our radar sent us a gift. There's the scramble that ensues: can I find something fast enough that feels like it had some level of thought given to it? *“Bingo! There it is, it's perfect.”* The relief evaporates as we look it up and discover the dreadful note *“Usually ships in 2-4 weeks.”*

Our present society with on-demand everything and same-day shipping on nearly anything we could possibly want makes it feel like we have patience if we wait just a few minutes. When we are forced to wait, though, we're reminded that we're powerless to do anything else. We can't make the package come faster. We can't make the doctor call sooner. We can't make the annoying neighbor be gracious towards us. We have to be “patient,” though our patience is usually more grudging than genuine.

God, however, never *has* to be patient. He who made the universe by mere utterance could likewise speak and immediately eliminate every problem that would require His patience. Yet, we are millennia out from when we as human beings broke the world and God waits patiently for the resolution to that most horrific problem. Why? Here we return to that starting point of love: the Bible tells us repeatedly it is because of God's love for us. He is patient that we might experience His salvation.

How often do I set aside my love for others when I just feel impatient? As beneficiaries of patience, we are called to likewise show patience. It is much harder for me to give genuine patience to those around me than it is to take in the patience I am often blissfully unaware of how badly I need. As we continue this journey, let's pray that those around us would see our lives ornamented by a patience that only makes sense because we have a God whom we can trust is still working.

PRAYER: *Lord Jesus, please help me to be patient as you work, recognizing that you have exercised patience throughout history for the sake of bringing more people – me included – into your presence. May I show a patient confidence that makes others want to know about the one in whom I trust. It is in your name that I pray. Amen.*

Day 5: Kindness

“For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?”

– Matthew 5:46

White Elephant gifts are always an interesting exercise. Some people take a great deal of care into picking out something as nice as possible for the gift exchange within the set price parameters. Others get an intentional gag gift. Others still ignore the rules and get something super cheap. If we’ve put care into our choice and then someone else breaks the rules and gives a true piece of junk that we receive, we might not be so holly jolly.

Do we keep in mind our gift exchange with God amid our other exchanges?

The Father gave the very Son for us, God came into the world so that we could be made right and what do we do? We follow bits of His law and act righteous as if we were living the sort of life Jesus lived for us. No White Elephant gift has ever been *that* out of balance. When I think about that, it makes me wonder: if the kindness I receive from God is so out of balance with what I can possibly give Him in return, then how can I be constantly, carefully measuring if those around me have given just the right proportionate return of kindness to me?

Jesus spoke to the attitude we should have, and the one His Spirit empowers us to have when he told the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35). Christmas is all about us receiving the most uneven exchange of gifts ever – the worst White Elephant gift looks *perfect* in comparison. When we’re reminded of the kindness God provides to us even though we deserve the “severity” Paul talks about in Romans 11:22, where does that leave our bad White Elephant moments in life?

The atrocious, ill-fitting, tacky gift given to us by people in their actions, their care, their responsibilities towards us deserves what our natural response would suggest: anger, disdain, rejection. Trouble is, so does everything we do before our God. The Spirit enables us to recognize that in ourselves and He challenges us to live as people of kindness in those moments when doling out just desserts seems so much more appealing.

PRAYER: *Lord, I know you have done for me so much more than I deserve, yet I can always see where others do less for me than I feel I deserve. Help me to move from keeping tabs to erasing them. Help me to show kindness when kindness is withheld, having your attitude in my interactions with the people you bring into my life. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.*

Day 6: Goodness

“Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.”

– Mark 10:18

The phrase “Goody Two Shoes” comes from a children’s book of the same name about an orphan named Margery Meanwell. Meanwell, the story goes, suffered horribly but did so with a cheerful disposition and desire to do good. Left with only one shoe for a time, she was positively exuberant when she finally was given two shoes.

With her over-the-top reaction and her woodenly consistent goodness to others, her name became a phrase for the people who *appear* saccharinely good. We wait for the other shoe to drop and reveal the real person, since such a truly good person only is found in a book of morality tales.

Jesus is the one who truly is that good and even better, no catch to locate. He came to the earth to show us what is indeed good.

He spent years with a group of men He knew would abandon Him, yet loved them before and after they failed. Jesus treated everyone with dignity; even those who opposed Him. After all, they received the grace of getting to interact with and be challenged by the very Lord of the universe. Jesus is generous beyond anyone’s deserving in His care for and blessings to us.

How do we follow the way God has walked in our lives? Goodness is seeking to please God. Goodness is holding to His commandments. Goodness is being generous to those around us, rather than putting ourselves first.

Goodness is what happens when our lives overflow with response to how God has treated us. When we live according to the way of our Lord, we bring to life true goodness. As God uses us to do good, we help to make “good” believable and not some myth relegated to children’s morality tales.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be good. My preferences turn me away from the Good and towards what pleases me in the moment. Help me to seek to honor you, love you and show generosity to those around me. I pray in the Good Shepherd’s name. Amen.

Part III



Gifts for the Long Haul

Day 7: Faithfulness

“You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.”

– Leviticus 19:12

Are your Christmas lights still working? Most years, I can barely get through December, much less early January without having to do some repair. I love inflatable snowmen and similar decorations, but the power adapters they come with are incredibly flakey. Unable to count on them, I keep a few replacements on hand. These decorations' parts are not models of faithfulness.

God's people are even worse. Throughout the Bible, we see God decorating the Earth with people called to love Him and love their neighbors, but from the earliest days on, we struggle to do either of those for any length of time. Our lights go out and our power adapters fizzle. What does God do over and over again? He repairs and replaces our broken pieces.

Recently, one of my inflatables went out and its plug was not the sort most of them use. I had to hunt down where I could get a compatible replacement. I can try to “give” faithfulness to these decorations, but I am limited in my knowledge of what they need and when they will need it. God isn't limited like I am. He came into the world knowing *exactly* how all of us would break and brought the ultimate, lasting fix for us, not just a perpetual promise to swap parts. God is *that* faithful.

Paul's inclusion of faithfulness in the Fruit of the Spirit comes as he is knee-deep into a letter to people who are very much struggling to be faithful. He knows perfectly well that even when people believe in Jesus, they still struggle to be faithful! That's why we need the Holy Spirit's help.

Is there any gift we can give to others around us this coming year that is better than faithfulness? We cannot do it perfectly, but a new year is a wonderful time to seek to be people who follow through on what we say. We start by showing the other forms of spiritual fruit to those around us. We continue by following through even when life becomes a slog.

When we do that, when we light up in faithfulness as God restores us, we show the beauty of God's love to those who need it.

PRAYER: Lord, please use me to show the beauty of your love to all those around me. As we look to a new year, I ask that you help me to be faithful to serving those you entrust to me as friends and family, coworkers and neighbors, remembering how faithful you are to me. I pray this in the name of my Savior, Jesus. Amen.

Day 8: Gentleness

“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

– Proverbs 15:1

If we want to be cantankerous, Jesus turning over the tables at the temple has a huge appeal. *If Jesus could get that angry – and do so righteously – why can't I?* Besides the obvious answer that none of us are Jesus, we can also forget that Jesus showed far more examples of gentleness than of anger.

The temple incident is so memorable because it isn't the norm. Jesus doesn't fill the four Gospels with superhero-type antics of constant carnage. Does he use a biting phrase at times? Sure. But, most of all, He shows gentleness to both the downtrodden and the dense, such as His always-behind-the-times disciples. The temple incident is Jesus puncturing the calmer tone of teaching times and healing to make a very dramatic, unmistakable point as He propels his story toward the Cross.

As we seek to give the best sort of gifts in the Christmas season and into this New Year, one of the best we can give is that sort of gentleness. Gentleness in response to harshness we face. Gentleness when people are being dumb. Gentleness when we just don't feel like it.

Such gentleness does indeed turn away wrath and wrath melts into the background, it does something else. Gentleness turns people *toward* the Kingdom.

Our Good Shepherd never lost sight of calling His flock out of the pain of the world and into His tender care. When we hang onto gentleness ourselves, we do the same. We could rightly note even the temple incident has a tinge of gentleness, because He saw the people being taken advantage of.

The money changers were overcharging to exploit the poor and the merchants were set up in the court of the Gentiles, shutting out the God-fearers who wanted to know more about the Lord. Even Jesus's harshest reactions came for the sake of gently caring for the poor and oppressed, that more would be brought into that Kingdom.

PRAYER: *Lord, please give me gentleness. Too often I jump to places that bring wrath rather than still it. Even when I need to stand firm, let me stand with gentle care for those whom you've made in your image, always desiring to see more know you. Let me be an instrument of your gentle care this new year I ask in Jesus's name. Amen.*

Day 9: Self-Control

“Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

– Matthew 26:41

I’ll admit I have a bad habit when shopping for Christmas gifts. I inevitably find some nifty things I’d like to buy for myself. They are often oddball things, too; stuff I’m all but certain I will not be receiving. No one would even stumble across whatever the thingamabob is! I leave the browser tab open or put it in the cart, separated from the stuff I’m definitely buying.

“I’ll think about this,” I tell myself. I know I’m in trouble at that point.

Each of us has self-control issues *somewhere*. We know we should resist doing, saying or thinking something, but just “can’t.” We can’t, but God can. As we turn to Him in this New Year, rather than resolutions that attempt to fix our flaws the foundation of our too-soon-sapped strength, let’s ask God to help us better resist temptation in *His* strength. The key is turning away from counting on ourselves.

Satan wants us to think we can do it. “Just try harder, you don’t need any help,” is a motto from the pit of Hell. The devil loves it when we make a huge list of resolutions everyone (including us) knows will end up in the trash can by the end of January.

Instead, if we start the year in prayer, in His Word and with His people in church, we may not immediately find every temptation has lost its appeal for us, but we will find that the supports He provides make that temptation at least *weaker*. Nothing could be a better resolution for this year than to depend more on Him, including His help to deal with those areas where we desperately need more self-control. He is strong in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

PRAYER: *Lord, please help me be self-controlled. To stand firm when temptation beckons me away from faithfulness. Help me to be fixed on what is good and pleasing to you so that as I enter a year called to serve others that my own weaknesses wouldn’t get in the way of doing so. Let me be strong enough in your strength to do what is genuinely pleasing to you. I ask in the name of the only one who has faced what I faced yet resisted temptation, Jesus. Amen.*

Part IV



Rightly Focused Gifts

Day 10: Spirit-Filled Living

“For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.”

– Romans 8:2

Having a big stock of batteries ahead of Christmas isn't quite as essential as it was years ago. There are more electronics about than ever before, but an awful lot of things that need power are rechargeable nowadays. But we've all probably given a gift only to realize we forgot those batteries or, today, to realize the recipient won't be able to try it for some time because it has an agonizingly slow charger.

As we've been exploring the Fruit of the Spirit, it is notable that the journey starts and ends with the power necessary to give the gifts that are listed to those around us. In Galatians 5:16, Paul says we should “walk by the Spirit” to avoid falling into the sinful opposites of the fruit he later outlines. Then, as we reach the end of the list, Paul returns to the point again, calling us as those “led by the Spirit” to “keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25).

That's great, Paul, but do you realize how hard it is to keep in step with the Spirit? I'm not ready! In my doubts about my own abilities, I can arrive at the temptation to put off being God's hands and feet in this world. Sometimes we do need more preparation before we can do everything God has placed on our hearts to do, but even in the preparations, the Fruit of the Spirit is always in season.

As we think about the places we feel ready to serve this year and also the places we feel woefully ill-equipped, we are challenged to ask, “How can I show God's care and love *right now*?” While God will use life experiences, training and other preparations for specific ways we can serve His people and the world around us, He is the one who enables us to show love, joy, peace, patience and all the other examples of spiritual fruit every single day of our lives. We do not need preparation before we show kindness. We do not need experience before the Spirit gives us a gentle response instead of a harsh retort.

Today the fruit is in season. He is the one bringing it out in us. We get the joy of “re-gifting,” harvesting the work of the Spirit in our lives and serving others with it.

PRAYER: Lord, please help me to see how you are bringing out spiritual fruit in me right now. If there are areas I need to prepare to serve, help me to do so, but also please show me where I can already give to others of the fruit you're ripening in my life right now. I ask this in Jesus's name. Amen.

Day 11: Humility

“And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

– Philippians 2:8

Did you ever have a gift you received at Christmas growing up that you wanted the other kids around the neighborhood to know about because you wanted them to know you had the “it” thing? Maybe you knew you shouldn’t be “proud” by announcing you were given it, so you just tried to make it somehow “accidentally” get discovered.

A lot of times we act that way still. Perhaps we’re more subtle, but in our pride, we want to nudge people into discovering how great we are just below the veneer of humility we know Christians “should” maintain. We can’t be *too* forward, so we just hint. And hint. And hint some more. We want people to notice what is great about us or our accomplishments and to look up to us. Given a strong enough position – perhaps status at work or church, for example – we move from hinting to simply stating, *“I am important, respect me.”*

Jesus certainly could have done that. No one has ever walked this earth who was entitled to more respect than He was. Yet what did He do? He came into the world as a baby born amongst farm animals. Even as He grew up, He did not show off His powers. Even when we get too full of ourselves and think we have something to show off, neither should we.

If Jesus could live for decades on this earth without summoning His glory to point out to everyone how He really *is* a big deal, then neither should His followers. The way of Jesus means not seeking worldly glory for ourselves. As we ask Him to help us deal with our pride, we not only honor Him, but we also get out of the way so those around us can see the one who is worth noticing.

PRAYER: *Jesus, please help me to see the places where I’m proud and with your help to move to humility. I want my life to be ornamented by your fruit in my life, not my own self-important decoration. Help me to remember that my importance is not in the things of this world, but in your love and care for me. I pray in Jesus’s name. Amen.*

Day 12: Not Provoking

“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

Jesus came into the world to bring peace, as we saw back on Day 3. As we near the end of this journey, Paul takes us to a very practical application: we are to be people who don't *provoke*. We provoke people in all sorts of ways, but as we follow the Spirit's lead and turn towards what He desires for us, our trajectory should be towards provoking ever less.

That's not how we operate as a culture. We live in a moment where provoking people to anger is almost an art form. It's a form of entertainment, even! Sometimes we are the provokers and sometimes we are the provoked. But, as followers of the Prince of Peace, that's a path we're called to reject, not make our own.

In Matthew 5:9, Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” We should be those who leave a wake of peace where there is disorder. When those around us are busy rocking boats, we should be the calming harbor for our neighbors, coworkers and others we meet. If we are serving the prince of peace, that makes us ambassadors of peace.

When we think of the list of how the Fruit of the Spirit is manifest in our lives – *love, joy, peace, patience...* – every one of these aspects is something that moves in the opposite direction of provoking. What if each of us made this a year of soothing the pain of those around us by gently, patiently loving those around us, sharing joy, showing compassion and generosity, while living faithfully and with temperance? If we as the Church together do that, the impact would be huge. Let's not get roped into only thinking on a grand scale, however. If we do that even individually, the impact will be great, too, because it will matter to those we have the blessing to cross paths with.

While society at large is something none of us can solve, everyone we know has problems that feel as insurmountable as Mount Everest (or the return line at a store after Christmas) to them. May we help airlift people by reflecting glimpses of God's goodness and love in our daily life.

PRAYER: *Prince of peace, I too often am the opposite of an ambassador of peace and I live in a world that loves to find new ways to be provoked. In this new year, show me how to be your ambassador, someone who helps push away anger when it flares up. I ask this in your precious name, Jesus. Amen.*

Epiphany: Not Envy

“So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, ‘Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?’ For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up.”

– Matthew 27:18

The story of Jesus’s earthly ministry is bookended by the opposite of the fruit made manifest. Herod, encountering the wisemen did not rejoice or turn to faithfulness, but rather doubled down on his coveting of the position of the Messiah. He was not in the line of David and so, unable to legitimately claim the title of King of the Jews, he decided to shore up his claim by attempting to murder the rightful baby King of the Jews by killing every boy under the age of two in his realm (Matthew 2:16).

At the point of the mock trial against Jesus decades later, the rightful King was again in a death-encircled circumstance because of envy. Pilate, hardly a man who embodied the Fruit of the Spirit, could see that those turning over Jesus did so for envy’s sake rather than for righteous concern. We are those who confess a Savior handed over to execution because of people’s envy. How sad it is when people see us modeling the envious attitude of Jesus’s executors rather than the mind of the humble Shepherd. Yet so often that’s exactly what we do. We envy others’ success and power as much as those who only think this world is all there is.

Each of the aspects of the Fruit reveals the character of our God who calls us into His very presence. As such, it should remind us that we have no need for envy for we have something better, heavenly treasure that “neither moth nor rust can destroy” (Matthew 6:20). When we have the very best, why anchor ourselves down to wanting something lesser?

I wish I could say I have this down pat, but I don’t. There are times I see friends who have had more success or whose ministries grow faster or for whom things seem to go more smoothly and I think, “If only...” Yet, we serve a Lord who took on the hardest road and unlike you and me, He deserved none of the struggles and certainly not death. The road may be rough, but the beauty of the journey we have taken together this Christmas season is that we are reminded that the One who faced the roughest of roads for us is there with us the whole way. And as our Lord walks with us, He brings out the fruit we’ve explored to help others on that same road.

PRAYER: Father, thank you for sending your Son into the world and for staying with me by placing your Spirit into my heart. Help me to cling to you and not worldly envy as I travel through life and to share the gifts you give me with others each step of the way. I pray in Jesus’s name. Amen.

Next Steps

Thank you for joining me on this devotional adventure over the Christmas season. If you are looking to explore the Scriptures further and experience some of that adopted family of God we discussed above, I would like to invite you to take advantage of the following opportunities to do just that from the two ministries I serve with.

Little Hills Church

We are a new church in St. Charles, Missouri and we would love to have you join us as we seek to share the love of our amazing God with our neighbors near and far. Launched in 2020, we have embraced being a “hybrid church,” seeking to use both online and in-person avenues to do ministry in our community and around the world.

Interested? Please visit us on the web at www.littlehills.church to find out more about how you can get involved. You can also follow us on social media @LittleHillsChurch (on Facebook, Mastodon, YouTube and Instagram) and @LittleHillsC (on X).

FaithTree Christian Fellowship

FaithTree aims to connect believers from different churches for worship, prayer and thought-provoking conversations about faith, while making a welcoming space for people who are not yet sure what they believe. We are a ministry led by and rooted in local churches; you can learn more about our story at www.faithtreecf.org or on social media @FaithTreeCF. Please check out our calendar of events and join us soon!

Questions? Comments?

Are you wanting to know more about who Jesus is? Do you have a question about the Bible? Would you simply like to provide feedback on this devotional booklet? Please feel free to e-mail me at timothy.butler@faithtree.com. I am always happy to hear from you!