



HT

HOLINESS TODAY

THE
FRUIT
of
THE
SPIRIT

THE FRUIT OF THE
SPIRIT IN LETTER
AND LIFE P. 10
Kara Lyons Pardue

THE FRUIT OF
THE SPIRIT IS
LOVE P. 14
Jorge Julca

WITH CARLA SUNBERG
IN ETHIOPIA P. 32
Carla Sunberg

\$4.95 JAN/FEB 2022
HOLINESSTODAY.ORG
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

EDITOR IN CHIEF Bonnie Perry

MANAGING EDITOR Jordan Eigsti

CONTENT EDITOR Nathanael Gilmore

GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS Eugénio Duarte
David Graves
David Busic
Gustavo Crocker
Filimão Chambo
Carla Sunberg

GENERAL SECRETARY Gary Hartke

HOLINESS TODAY
PO Box 351 • Congers, NY 10920-0351
Phone: 1-845-267-3040
Fax: 1-845-267-3478
Email: HT@cabeywest.com
Subscription price: \$20.00 (U.S.) per year.

EDITORIAL OFFICES
Church of the Nazarene, Inc.
Global Ministry Center
17001 Prairie Star Parkway
Lenexa, KS 66220
Phone: 1-913-577-0500
Email: holinesstoday@nazarene.org

POSTMASTER
Please send address changes to:
Holiness Today, PO Box 351
Congers, NY 10920-0351

Periodicals postage paid at Kansas City, MO.
Canadian GST No. R129017471.

Holiness Today (ISSN 1523-7788) is published bimonthly by The Church of the Nazarene, Inc., Global Ministry Center, 17001 Prairie Star Parkway, Lenexa, KS 66220.

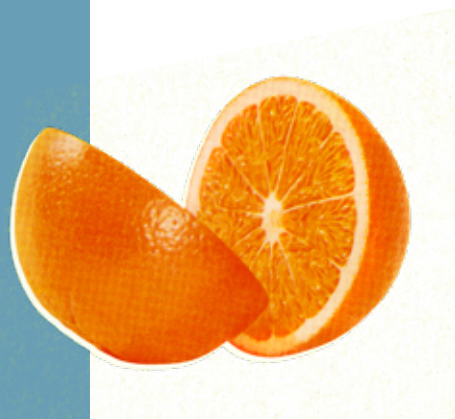
PHOTO CREDITS: iStock—OFC, IFC, 1, 3, 10-11, 14-31; Carla Sunberg—7, 32-33; Nazarene Compassionate Ministries—34; Nazarene News—36. All author photos courtesy of authors.

MEMBER Evangelical Press Association



HOLINESS TODAY

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2022
VOL. 24, NO. 1



THE FRUIT *of* THE SPIRIT

EDITORIAL: BEARING FRUIT — <i>Bonnie Perry</i>	2
A WORD FROM . . .: RASPBERRIES — <i>T. A. Noble</i>	3
FROM THE ARCHIVES: REMEMBERING PILOT POINT — <i>Nazarene Archives</i>	4
RESEARCH: WELCOME TO THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE	5
USA/CANADA: HALF-MILLION MOBILIZATION — <i>Stan Reeder</i>	8
THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IN LETTER AND LIFE — <i>Kara Lyons-Pardue</i>	10
LOVE — <i>Jorge Julca</i>	14
JOY — <i>Jeren Rowell</i>	16
PEACE — <i>Shawna Songer-Gaines</i>	18
PATIENCE — <i>Ingrid Bella Lustaña</i>	20
KINDNESS — <i>Carolina Guzman</i>	22
GOODNESS — <i>Gordon Smith</i>	24
FAITHFULNESS — <i>Ian Fitzpatrick</i>	26
GENTLENESS — <i>Samantha Chambo</i>	28
SELF-CONTROL — <i>Scott Sherwood</i>	30
AROUND THE WORLD WITH THE BGS: <i>Carla Sunberg</i>	32
NCM: HEALTHIER SOIL AND HIGHER YIELDS	34
NAZARENE NEWS: IN CASE YOU MISSED IT	36

BEARING FRUIT

DEAR FRIENDS,

Happy New Year to you from all of us at *Holiness Today*!

I have an invitation for you: would you be so kind as to play a quick game with me to ring in 2022? Sorry, New Testament scholars and Bible Quizzers, you have to sit this one out.

Here we go: the fruit of the Spirit—how many does Paul list in Galatians 5? Now, name them if you can.

When the HT team decided to theme the current issue around the fruit of the Spirit, we tried this exercise. I'm embarrassed to admit that I confidently answered "Seven. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control." I threw in, "against such there is no law," just to show off.

Oops. In verses 22-23, the apostle identifies nine; somehow goodness and faithfulness just didn't make their way on to my list. I'm wondering what that says about my character development in a couple of areas! My point is this: the fruit of the Spirit is the stuff (as Kara Lyons Pardue reminds us) of wall plaques and refrigerator magnets. We can recite them glibly, but how often do we consider the deep work of the Spirit in our lives and the ensuing fruit—or lack thereof—as a "visible product of invisible circumstances"?

I am inspired by Kara's examination of the familiar Galatians verses and her gentle admonition to incorporate a more practical vision of their purpose into my everyday life. Her video chat, which readers can access through the QR code on page 13, enriched my understanding even further.

T. A. Noble, via video, also teaches us about the fruit of the Spirit with a parable about his own experience growing raspberries in his vegetable patch. "We planted the canes," he says, "We watered them. We

put nets over them to guard them from the birds. We picked them and we ate them. But, we didn't *grow* them." This column, *A Word From . . .*, will be a new regular feature in *Holiness Today*; you can find it on page 3.

In addition, we are pleased to introduce the following regular columns in the current and future issues of *Holiness Today*:

- *Around the World with the BGS*—a travelogue. In this issue, you'll accompany General Superintendent Carla Sunberg in her travels to Ethiopia.
- *From the Archives*—a glimpse into Nazarene history from our denominational archives.
- *Welcome to the Church of the Nazarene*—fast, fun facts about our global Nazarene family.
- *In Case You Missed It*—recaps from recent highlights in Nazarene News.
- *Departmental/ministry features* highlighting our partners such as Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International, Nazarene Youth International, and Nazarene Missions International.

The *Holiness Today* team hopes you enjoy these new features. We'd love to hear from you, our Nazarene family.

In the meantime, Happy New Year to you. May the Lord cultivate in your life this year deep abiding growth in the Spirit of God who brings an abundance of fruit in its season.

Bonnie Perry is editor in chief of *Holiness Today*.

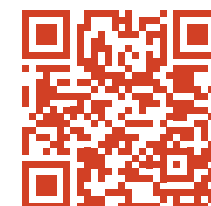


A WORD FROM . . .
T.A. NOBLE

RASPBERRIES

WE PLANTED THE
RASPBERRY CANES. WE
WATERED THEM. WE PUT
NETS OVER THEM . . .
WE PICKED THEM AND
WE ATE THEM. BUT, WE
DIDN'T GROW THEM.

T. A. NOBLE



Scan the code to hear T. A. Noble talk in depth about the Fruit of the Spirit.



WELCOME TO THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

USA/CANADA REGION

Avg. worship attendance: 423,529

EURASIA REGION

Avg. worship attendance: 214,622

MESOAMERICA REGION

Avg. worship attendance: 250,459

ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Avg. worship attendance: 99,064

SOUTH AMERICA REGION

Avg. worship attendance: 198,456

AFRICA REGION

Avg. worship attendance: 367,490

Denotes Creative Access areas as well as areas the Church of the Nazarene has not yet reached.

WELCOME TO THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

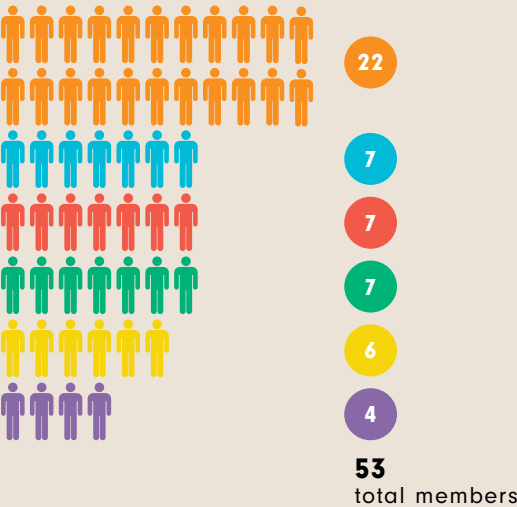
REMEMBERING PILOT POINT

the GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS REGION OF BIRTH



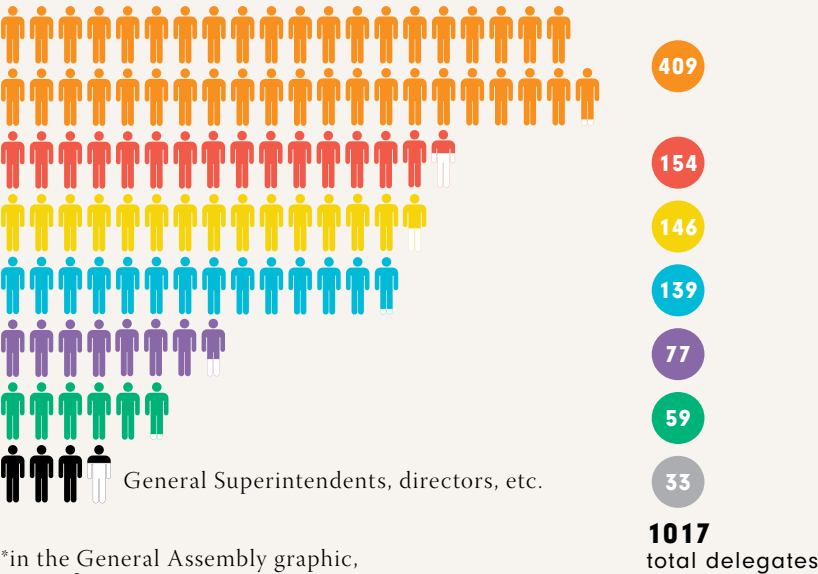
The current Board of General Superintendents is the most diverse in Nazarene history, with superintendents from four different Regions.

the GENERAL BOARD MEMBERS BY REGION



The General Board is composed of district superintendents, assigned ordained ministers, and lay leaders representing the global church and elected by the General Assembly. Convening in late February each year, the board has governing responsibility for the global Church of the Nazarene between sessions of the General Assembly. The General Board carries out the corporate business of the denominational offices.

the GENERAL ASSEMBLY DELEGATES BY REGION*



The General Assembly is the supreme doctrine-formulating, lawmaking, and elective authority of the Church of the Nazarene, subject to the provisions of the Church Constitution. —Manual ¶300

This chart represents the number of delegates from each of the six regions. Data taken from the 29th General Assembly in 2017.

REGIONAL COLORS

- USA/CANADA
- MESOAMERICA
- SOUTH AMERICA
- EURASIA
- AFRICA
- ASIA-PACIFIC

In the fall of 2021, Stan Ingersol, manager of Nazarene Archives, traveled to Pilot Point, Texas, to oversee the installation of new plaques on a monument to the Church of the Nazarene. Below is a portion of the text on these new plaques.

A MEETING OF HEARTS AND MINDS

Under a large tent erected on this site, the General Council of the Holiness Church of Christ and the Second General Assembly of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene met in joint sessions from October 10-17, 1908.

One year earlier, the First General Assembly (Chicago, October 1907) united the Church of the Nazarene, centered on the Pacific coast, with the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America, centered on the Atlantic coast. The Pennsylvania Conference of the Holiness Christian Church united with them in September 1908.

The Second General Assembly, conducted here, made the Nazarenes a national church by giving them a strong presence in the South. The delegates who assembled here laid aside the regional bitterness that had lingered since the Civil War in order to effect “a great spiritual marriage,” which occurred on October 13, at 10:40 A.M., by a unanimous rising vote.



Stan Ingersol next to the Church of the Nazarene monument

“We feel ourselves a part of that body of believers raised up to spread sanctified holiness over these lands, and thus that we are a part of that company who are the real successors of John Wesley and the early Methodists.”

P. F. Bresee, First General Superintendent



HALF-MILLION MOBILIZATION

A CALL TO PRAYER

by STAN REEDER

“Devote yourselves to prayer.”

This was Paul’s advice to the Colossian church (Colossians 4:2) as he wrote from his prison cell. Prayer was that important to him.

Someone once quipped: “Prayer is like flossing one’s teeth—everyone agrees that we should do it, but only a few actually do.”

Phillips Brooks, the great 19th century American pastor who wrote the lyrics to “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” said: “If man is man and God is God, to live without prayer is not merely an awful thing, it is an infinitely foolish thing.”

Karl Barth, the 20th century theologian, observed: “To clasp hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.”

Devote yourselves to prayer!

The late Dr. J. Edwin Orr, one of the greatest revival historians, wrote: “Whenever God is ready to do something new with His people, He always sets them to praying.”

Devote yourselves to prayer!

We don’t always understand the power of prayer. My father was a prototypical professional engineer—he had a pocket protector full of mechanical pencils. His tie-clip was a miniature slide-rule. As a kid, I was amazed at his engineering feats around the house.

We had a full-size tent trailer that my father suspended from the rafters of our little one-car garage. He developed a block and tackle series of pulleys and levers so that he could lift the one-ton trailer off the ground, all by himself. He would stand at the end of the driveway, pulling a series of ropes as that trailer would miraculously lift off the ground. He was using technology that had been invented by Archimedes, the Greek mathematician, over 200 years before Christ. Archimedes once arranged a series of pulleys and cogs that enabled him, by his own strength, to pull a great ship out of the water and onto the beach.

Archimedes boasted: “Give me a place to stand, and I will move the earth.” As Christians, our corollary should be: *Give us a place to kneel, and the Lord can move the world!*

Devote yourselves to prayer!

Alfred Lord Tennyson, the national poet of Great Britain, a brilliant Cambridge scholar and bestowed

with the title of Lord by Queen Victoria, penned the now famous line: “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.”

Peter Kreeft, professor of philosophy at Boston College, mused: “I strongly suspect that if we saw all the difference even the tiniest of our prayers make, and all the people those little prayers were destined to affect, and all the consequences of those prayers down through the centuries, we would be so paralyzed with awe at the power of prayer that we would be unable to get up off our knees for the rest of our lives.”

Devote yourselves to prayer!

Oswald Chambers noted: “Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work.”

Devote yourselves to prayer!

The half million people of the Church of the Nazarene in USA and Canada are invited to devote ourselves to prayer in the “Half Million Mobilization.” On Sunday, May 1, we are issuing a call to every one of our 5,000 churches and 500,000 members to devote themselves to prayer, asking the Lord to bring revival and ultimately resurgence in his Church across USA and Canada.

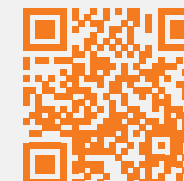
Will you answer the call?

The Lord can bring revival and resurgence.

Devote yourselves to prayer!



Scan the code to watch a promotional video about the Half-Million Mobilization.



Scan the code to watch a prayer montage video that can be used in your church service.

usacanadaregion.org/pray

THE FRUIT of THE SPIRIT *in* LETTER *and* LIFE

by KARA
LYONS
PARDUE



IN TODAY'S INSTANT-GRATIFICATION CULTURE, our habits of Bible reading have sometimes consisted of not much more than searching through Scripture for a pithy line that can bring a moment's encouragement. I joke with my students that these verses are "wall decal passages." What I mean by this is that there are certain verses in Scripture that are so beautiful, poignant, or memorable that they attract attention and reflection when they stand alone. We sometimes transform such verses into wall art or images on our social media feed. This habit is the spiritual equivalent of eating cotton candy: sure, it's enjoyable as an occasional treat but insufficient if it constitutes our sole source of nutrition.

Scripture verses are not meant to function in isolation; they have meaning and the Spirit uses them to convict when lodged within their textual context, working with the other verses and chapters that surround them. They have force as pieces of broader arguments that comprise letters, stories, or poems, which, when read and discussed together, can shape and challenge communities into patterns of Christlikeness. A verse of text in isolation may indeed help us feel better for a moment, but we need more to nourish the costly habits of faithfulness to which Christ's disciples are called.

If there were ever a passage that begs to be turned into an inspirational meme, it is Galatians 5:22-23, in which the Apostle Paul lists the "fruit of the Spirit." When extracted from the context of Paul's argument, the characteristics (listed in the verses) of a life ruled by God's Spirit sound like pleasant, abstract ideas: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. We generally regard these in a couple of ways. First, we might think about them as inward intentions, emotions, or attitudes. In the realm of internal dispositions, however, such concepts lie beyond the possibility of observation, skating neatly past any metrics for assessment. We simply can't *know* with certainty what's happening inside someone's mind or heart. Second, we may restrict Paul's listing of virtues to the realm of ideals, something we aspire to but aren't likely to attain. The follow-up line from Paul—"Against such things there is no law" (v. 23b)—strikes us as either obvious or unrelated. "Of course, no one could outlaw love!" we might object. Or perhaps, "What does law have to do with these heavenly virtues?"

The trouble is, the very widespread biblical metaphor of “fruit” intends the opposite of ethereal [vague, beautiful-but-other-worldly] interpretations. Fruit (Greek, *karpos*) stands in the biblical tradition as the very visible product of a set of invisible circumstances. The metaphor is apt: there is no surer way to test the health of a fruit-producing tree or vine than tasting the evidence at harvest time. Likewise, a person’s speech and actions can reveal an internal character that is either wholesome or rotten.

For example, when Jesus speaks of *fruit*, he points to the outward, observable words and deeds that constitute evidence of one’s true inner condition (Matthew 7:15-20; Luke 13:6-9; John 12:24; 15:1-8). In the well-known parable of the sower, the word for the good grain that is harvested is *karpos* (see Mark 4:8); English translations use “harvest” and “fruit” interchangeably to express what is meant by this Greek term. Whichever translation we prefer, in Jesus’s teaching, the metaphor is clear: the quality of the plant, tree, vine, or soil shows up in the fruit it produces. This imagery was apparently part of John the Baptist’s teaching (Matthew 3:8-10; Luke 3:8-9) and continued to be a way that early Christians understood God’s presence to manifest in good ways in believers’ lives (see Hebrews 13:15; James 3:17-18). In writing to the Philippians, Paul is able to talk about his own work as “fruitful” labor and his expectation for the *fruit* (or *harvest*) of righteousness among the congregation itself (1:22, 11).

As interpreters of Galatians 5:22-23, there may be good reasons why we shelve this loud chorus of support for understanding “fruit” as implying external actions displaying right-relationship with God. You see, in Galatians prior to our passage, Paul has expended significant time outlining the implications of God’s making us right in Christ (justification), which run counter to some of the physical, external actions the Galatians were

pursuing (e.g., 3:1-5; 5:2-6). In fact, reading Paul’s letter to the churches in Galatia as a whole may put a distinctly sour note on our sweet morsel of text in Galatians 5:22-23. The letter’s overall tone is not particularly “patient” or “gentle.” From the earliest verses, we cannot help but notice that Paul was distinctly displeased with the ways the Galatians were modifying his proclamation of Christ in their midst (see 1:6).

Discerning the purpose of scriptural laws and practices was at the heart of Paul’s wrestling with these gentile believers. He insists that the Galatians’ inclusion in God’s family has been thanks to Christ’s own faithfulness, not their observance of dietary laws or circumcision rites. Paul argues harshly to persuade Galatian believers to act in ways that recognize God’s justification comes solely through Jesus Christ. His arguments are so vehement that many Christian interpreters have understood Paul’s arguments as rejecting “works” entirely, exchanging outmoded practices in favor of “grace.”

It is true that Paul evidences exasperation and anger that the Galatians are sidelining the Christian essentials of grace and faith. In some portions of the letter, we might argue that Paul sees righteous ways of acting as unnecessary. But a wholesale rejection of “doing good” does not fit the letter as a whole, nor our pesky passage in chapter 5. In 5:16-26, active expressions of the Spirit’s presence in a community—*fruit* of the Spirit—are contrasted with the divisive costs of participation in the *works* of the flesh. The alternatives make pa-

tently clear that Paul is not disposing of the notion that right relationship with God produces visible behaviors. Rather, we must interrogate the actions themselves along with their source and outcomes.

In the immediate context of our passage, Paul begins with a paired command: “Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh” (5:16,

NRSV). Paul further explains his directive in the verses that follow, which reinforce that he is referring to conflicting modes of life that play out in communities (v. 17). Paul contrasts the fruit of the Spirit (*ho karpos tou pneumatos*; 5:22) with the works of the flesh (*ta erga tēs sarkos*).

Some of the “works of the flesh” fit with the sort of bodily lusts and desires we might expect from such a term: fornication and impurity (v. 19), drunkenness and reveling (v. 21). But others among these “works of the flesh” illustrate that Paul has something larger in mind when he uses “flesh” in a negative sense. Yes, some of the terms Paul cites relate to fleeting physical pleasures, but even more, they refer to ways of prioritizing external, earthly standards of worth, rather than godly ones: jealousy, strife, hatred, rivalries, and anger (v. 20). The language of works of the flesh shows an exercise or practice expended in pursuing the desires that crave superficial fulfillment and human validation. It is not merely the obviously sinful means of validating fleshly concerns that Paul has in mind here but also sneaky ones that we might convince ourselves are righteous (perhaps law-keeping; e.g., 5:18).

Paul refers to the “fruit of the Spirit” collectively (not multiple *fruits*). The fruit is the visible evidence of characteristics wrought by the Spirit, not by our effort or skill, as we remain in step with the Spirit. The verbs Paul uses for believers’ relationship to the Spirit are telling: *walking* in (*peripateō*, v. 16), *being led* by (*agō*, v. 18), *living* with (*zaō*), and *stepping in line* with (*stoicheō*, v. 25). These are terms of action and movement; the final term (*stoicheō*) is a metaphor drawn from unity within battle lines. The Spirit is already at work, and it is the job of believers to keep up with the Spirit’s movement. The result—that is, the fruit—of the Spirit’s activity is no less visible than the “works of the flesh” would be.

Their source is not our effort but the Spirit’s growth as our communities remain in the sphere of the Spirit’s power.

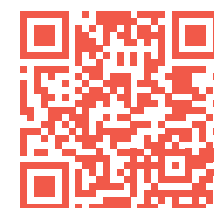
Spirit-grown behaviors are neither governed by law, nor can they be produced by law-observance. Thus, Paul celebrates the fruit produced by God’s Spirit: Followers of Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, are transformed into Jesus’ own costly pattern of self-giving love, joy despite hardship, determined peace-making, enduring patience, unbiased kindness, lavish generosity, steadfast faithfulness to God’s mission, gentle care, and conscientious self-control. Jesus’ death on the cross does not spare Christian communities from sacrifice, as 5:24 makes clear. Those of us who live out of allegiance to Christ are participants in the cruciform life (what Paul has termed *co-crucifixion* elsewhere; Galatians 2:19; Romans 6:6).

Paul’s context was much different than our own, but his message to the Galatian Christians—who had been distracted by side-issues and neglected the heart of the gospel—might hit us close to home. The contrast between *works of the flesh* and *fruit of the Spirit* is not in the size of the harvest, but the fruit’s quality that evidences its source. The Spirit may move us beyond our comfort zones, whether political, economic, or cultural. Human schemes, whether programming or marketing, are unable to artificially manufacture the harvest of true fruit that comes from the Spirit’s presence in our midst. May we keep in step.

Kara Lyons-Pardue is professor of New Testament at Point Loma Nazarene University and co-director of the Margaret Stevenson Center for Women’s Studies.



The fruit is the visible evidence of characteristics wrought by the Spirit, not by our effort or skill...



Scan the code to hear Kara Lyons-Pardue speak in further detail about The Fruit of the Spirit in Letter and Life.

THE FRUIT *of* THE SPIRIT *is*

LOVE

by JORGE JULCA

Love is a word widely known in all cultures. Because it is used in many ways, the word love has been trivialized, attributing to it a series of wrong meanings. Poets, philosophers, musicians, and writers of all time have written, reflected, and sung about love.

As believers, we recognize the centrality of love in the message of the Christian faith. The Scripture presents an abundant variety of references to love, not only as a Christian virtue but especially as the very essence of God (1 John 4:8). The theme of God's love for humanity is the guiding thread of Scripture and reveals to us a God who, according to his very nature, takes the initiative to seek us, forgive us, and offer us full life. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the incarnation of that love (John 3:16). He taught His disciples that the distinguishing mark of every believer was love, even love for our enemies (Matthew 5:43).

The eternal love of God manifested in spite of the sinful human condition exceeds our understanding. Paul, in a reverent manner, intercedes for us

before the Father in prayer that "we may be fully able to comprehend the fullness of that love" (Ephesians 3:14-20). But our human limitation in understanding God's divine gift is also evident in our inability to love others selflessly and in our failure to strip ourselves of pride and selfishness. Therefore, the presence and work of the Spirit in the life of the believer is indispensable, so that we can respond to the initiative of God's love and live with Christian freedom. Through the power of God's love in us, we become bridges of reconciliation to others and witnesses to God's supreme gift.

**Our poets
write beautiful
verses about
love, but
we live in a
culture of
unforgiveness.**

In his letter to the Galatians, after having developed the theological character of his epistle, Paul focuses on the ethical section by mentioning that true freedom in Christ is not a license to sin but a call to live governed by the Spirit in order to "serve through love" (Galatians 5:13-14). These practical verses present a contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit as irrefutable evidence of the authentic freedom found in a surrendered life.

The Spirit-filled life begins with love (Galatians 5:22), which is the basis for subsequent virtues. Genuine love, as a result of the fullness of the Spirit, does not respond with resentment to offense nor with vengeance to evil (1 Corinthians 13). It is more than a feeling that is carried away by intuition or situation—it is a divine gift that breaks the retributive tendencies of human behavior.

A pilgrimage of a life in the Spirit includes humility, gratitude, and compassion. We love in *humility* because we recognize that we do not deserve God's love, *gratitude* because we celebrate the grace that has reached us, and *compassion* because we see in others an opportunity to serve and love.

In a selfish and individualistic world, the power to show God's love, including to our enemies and to those we find difficult to love, is not the result of human effort. Rather, our demonstration of God's love comes through the work of Spirit, who purifies our hearts and makes us channels of grace. To love is to give unconditionally without expecting anything in return; it is a permanent and growing surrender because the God that provides us that love is inexhaustible.

Our world is in great need of God's love. We live in a world of contrasts and injustices, where the values of the Kingdom are inverted. Although the word "love" is woven into the language and popular culture, we don't often understand what it really means. Our musicians sing about love, but we act with hatred and indifference. Our poets write beautiful verses about love, but we live in a culture of unforgiveness.

Therefore, our calling is to seek what's best for others as the fruit of the divine love that has been poured into our hearts. This may be our greatest challenge in a world that demands coherence from those who believe in Jesus Christ. Our faithfulness will bear witness to integrity, authentic freedom, the transformation of life, and genuine Christianity.

"Let them love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that they are my disciples, if they love one another" (John 13:35).

Jorge Julca is president of the Nazarene Theological Seminary in Pilar, Argentina, and the regional education coordinator for the South America Region.



JOY

by JEREN ROWELL

The apostle Paul's description of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 is beautiful, and it is challenging. Having experienced pain, sorrow, or disillusionment in our lives, we may feel justified in stopping short at only the second word in the catalog of Christian fruitfulness: *Joy*.

Joy? We know the word and we use it often, but in what ways do we truly know the gift of joy? And what does joy mean when we are living in a world that seems so acquainted with grief, suffering, and sin?

The fruit of the Spirit is an integrated package of character qualities that every person who has received Jesus has received into their lives. *"The fruit of the spirit is: love, joy, peace . . ."* Joy comes with being a Christian, no extra charge. It is basic to what it means to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are a Christian, you have access to joy. Perhaps for some of us, it simply has not yet worked its way from the inside to the outside!

Joy is a prominent word in the Bible. A simple concordance check reveals that the word "joy" and its synonyms used to translate the pertinent biblical words come up some 400 times in the Scripture. And yet, we must admit that for all the joyful talk that is a part of our faith, real happiness can be an elusive experience. There

is a perfectly sensible reason for this. Life in this world can be serious and difficult. We see it on the faces of people everywhere. We notice it in the aisles of the grocery store, in the doctor's waiting room, when glancing at the faces of the other drivers at a four-way stop, even on the faces of the people with whom we worship every Sunday. We are stressed, distracted, worried, and tired.

Struggling to find joy is more than what I have observed—it is also where I have walked personally. While serving as a local church pastor, among a people who were truly a joy to serve, I experienced a dark season in my spiritual journey that made joy seem far away. There were several seeds of that "dark night of the soul," but one morning, my emotional well-being came crashing down in a pitiful heap of helplessness. I literally could not get out of bed. Through the care-full ministry of my wife, my sisters, and my physician, I not only recovered but also learned some deep lessons of faithful discipleship. It was during this time that I encountered Paul's words to the Galatian Christians with new eyes:

So now that you know God (or should I say, now that God knows you), why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to

the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world? . . . Where is that joyful and grateful spirit you felt then? (Galatians 4:9, 15, NLT).

I heard the Apostle asking me, "What happened to your joy?" Good question. I discovered that when we are willing to face the truth about our lives, the Lord helps us to see the things that can sabotage our joy.

There are at least two dimensions to joy. The first was already noted: Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit that is the possession of everyone who has received Christ Jesus as Savior, no exceptions. But second, it involves spiritual discipline. There is something about exercising our will, about intentionally *choosing* joy that strengthens our ability to experience joy more often and more thoroughly. Joy is grace, no doubt, but part of that grace involves a call to action. Joy is deeply connected to worship and to service.

Perhaps part of the reason some of us struggle to experience joy is because we are so disengaged from worship. There is a close connection. Worship really means, "to serve." To worship is to serve the purposes and glory of God. Worship is to acknowledge in my life the exclusive rule and reign of God. Joy can only be known when my life is rightly oriented to God as

the source of everything. The reason so many Christians don't experience joy is because our lives are compromised, scattered, and divided in terms of our loyalties. What often sabotages our happiness is not that life treats us unfairly, but that we make choices that move us outside of God's best design for our lives.

Another key to joy is to engage the clear call of Christ to offer our gifts in service to others, especially those who are suffering, poor, and marginalized. As Paul reminds us in Galatians 5:13: "Don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature.

Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love" (NLT). The wonderful gift of life together is that when we repent from trying to secure our own happiness and give ourselves to bless others, we re-

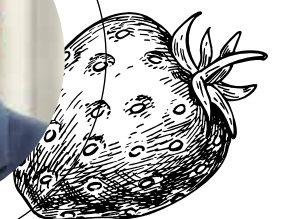
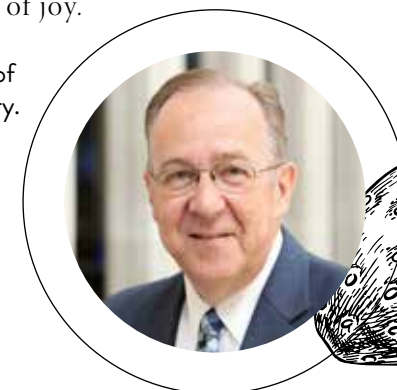
ceive the pure gift of the joy of the Lord.

The past months of the global pandemic have been difficult and trying for all of us. We are understandably weary. Yet even in times of suffering and sadness, "the fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy." May the Lord help us to receive this life-giving gift of joy.

Jeren Rowell is the president of Nazarene Theological Seminary.

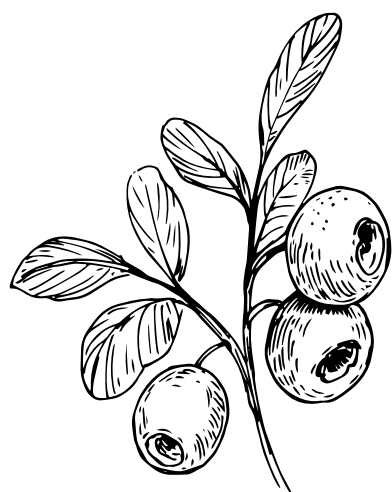


I heard the
Apostle asking
me, "What
happened to
your joy?"



THE FRUIT *of* THE SPIRIT *is* PEACE

by SHAWNA SONGER-GAINES



I keep the words, “it is well with my soul,” framed in my home and my office. I looked at those words every day as a source of peace—until one day, they weren’t. Something was not well with my soul.

Peace is a fruit of the Spirit everyone wants but few are willing to cultivate. Fruit might grow on trees, but peace does not. Peace is a gift of the Spirit, not another task we put on our “to-do” list, like keeping the pantry organized or eating less refined sugar. But like all gifts, we need hands and lives that are open to receive peace.

Peace is the gift carried by the 72 disciples Jesus sends into homes and villages we read in Luke 10. He instructs them to go door to door and say, “peace to this house.” Some will receive the gift of peace; others will not. When the gift of peace is not received, the disciples are to brush the dust off their feet and keep walking.

Before the disciples ever knock on a single door, they have been practicing peace. Jesus tells them to carry no purse, no bag, no sandals and to greet no one on the road. In other words, they are sent out with no

possessions, no status symbols, no creature comforts, and no one to impress. They are actively detaching themselves from anything that could distract from carrying peace.

**Peace is a
fruit of the
Spirit everyone
wants but few
are willing to
cultivate.**

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun defines the spiritual exercise of detachment as, “means of replacing the attachment to (1) idolatrous relationships and (2) self-serving goals and agendas for success, money, power, ego, productivity and image with wholehearted attachment to and trust in God alone.”¹ Jesus invites the disciples to the practice of detachment in order to be bearers of peace.

We see this relationship between peace and detachment in the life of the apostle Paul who dared to tell the Philippians to, “not worry about anything” but instead to let the peace of God “guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). This sounds like an impossible task, for what kind of cold-hearted person would really worry about nothing? Yet in the journey Jesus sent Paul on, Paul learned to count everything

1. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2015).

he gained in life as a loss compared to “the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord” (Philippians 3:7-8). Paul’s posture sounds like a holy detachment, not a cold indifference. To hold all these things that were once so important in a new light compared to knowing Christ reveals a heart that is more attached to Jesus than possessions, status, comfort, or the opinions of others.

Practicing this kind of detachment surely prepared the 72 disciples for some rejection. How else could they merely brush the dust off their feet and continue offering peace when the door was slammed in their faces? Only a heart solely attached to Jesus can brush the dust off and keep walking.

When I get rejected, I don’t want to brush the dust off. I want to examine the dust, pour over the dust, and organize a committee to analyze the dust. I roll in the dust, kicking and wailing, when I have become more attached to other’s opinions of me than I am to Jesus.

To receive the gift of peace does not require that life go smoothly, that we are never rejected or that we never face hardship. It simply requires a holy detachment to everything but Jesus so that we can brush the dust off when things don’t go our way and keep following after him.

Unfortunately, I only began the spiritual practice of detachment after I noticed it was no longer well with my soul. I made a list of my attachments, a brutally honest list. I had

to look at the words of things that I cared about more than following Jesus, written in my own hand, staring back at me from the page. It was devastating. These were the things robbing me of peace—not the church, or politics, or pandemic—these things that I chose to hold tightly even though they were merely dust.

The things I wrote on that list weren’t bad things! They were things and people I care deeply about, most for good reasons and some for complicated reasons. I didn’t have it in me to simply look at the list and say, “Shawna, stop caring about those things so much!” That wouldn’t work anyway. So instead, I brought that list with me to prayer every day, and I invited the Holy Spirit to care about those things for me, to hold them and come between me and that list, to fill up the space between my soul and these attachments so that I could loosen my grip and hold onto Jesus.

Our world is simultaneously desperate for peace and actively rejecting it. But I am finding a deeper well from which I can keep offering peace in small ways every day. I still struggle with attachments that rob me and others of peace. But I keep inviting the Holy Spirit to journey with me where Jesus sends me. Whether I am invited to a seat at the table or find the door slammed in my face, it is well with my soul.

Shawna Songer-Gaines is lead pastor at Trevecca Community Church.



THE FRUIT *of* THE SPIRIT *is* PATIENCE

by INGRID LUSTAÑA

“So how did you break your nose?”

“I didn’t.”

Awkward silence.

In the United States, my nose can be considered on the larger scale of normal. God was kind enough to construct a built-in table on my face for my glasses to sit on without slipping off. I considered “accidentally” breaking my nose so I could get free plastic surgery paid for by insurance. “Hmm... better not.”

Interestingly, when I became a missionary in Asia, the local people adored my *tall* nose. People would stop and take photos of my nose or ask to touch it. Even after I married my Filipino husband, our Asian friends and family would crowd around our babies searching to see if my children have inherited my coveted nose.

Thousands of years ago, the ancient Israelites prayed for a *long* nose. A long nose was an idiom used to describe patience. When the Old Testament writers mention anger,

most of the time in Hebrew it means “nose.” Instead of saying someone’s wrath was burning, Scripture literally says, “his nose burned hot.” Instead of saying “patient” or “slow to anger,” the Hebrew literally reads, “he had a long nose.” Although today my nose is seen as large and tall, I am certain that the Israelites would not have viewed my nose as unusual at all.

Certainly, my nose isn’t a reflection of my patience, a character trait I have struggled with. I’ve always dismissed my tendency toward impatience as just an aspect of my personality. I grew up in the outskirts of Miami, Florida. Impatience is a cultural norm; the demeanor of many people is fast-paced and loud. We often claim: “God created me this way, so everyone else needs to learn how to deal with it.”

But, when we receive Jesus as Lord, we become a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. We must produce his fruit—patience included. It no longer matters how we were raised, where we grew up, and who shaped our worldview. Through the power

of the Spirit, we are able to put off our former life and attitude and be made new in our minds and hearts (Ephesians 4:22-24). Through the power of the Spirit, the excuse for impatience that says, “This is who I am” is transformed into a celebration: “That is who I was.” Through the Spirit, we grow into something that looks less like us and more like Christ.

Unlike love and joy, where one can deeply feel and readily see the manifestations of the Spirit’s fruit, we may be made aware of our need for patience only by the effects that come from not having it.

I’ve heard many people joke, “Don’t pray for patience. God may test you greatly in his answer.”

Patience is not so much as a rare item to be collected as much as it is a journey of grace. This is why the ancient Israelites could only describe it with a metaphor that implies length.

A long nose is like a fuse on a stick of dynamite. A long nose provided time for the burning to stop. It is normal to get angry. It is normal to get frustrated. It is normal to *burn*. Patience is the length of burning time before the boom. The Holy Spirit has the ability to extend that length if we allow him. He wants our nose to be long enough to extend plenty of grace to others. How long was God’s nose for the Israelites as they struggled to follow him faithfully? Enough to last centuries! If God’s patience can last centuries, then how long is his nose for me?

When I became a missionary in Asia, local people adored my tall nose.

In Galatians, Paul declares that my heart is the dwelling place of God and his Spirit. As such, may I cultivate the fruit of patience for others and for myself as well.

Ingrid Bella Lustaña and her husband Terence are missionaries in Thailand.





THE FRUIT *of* THE SPIRIT *is* KINDNESS

by CAROLINA GUZMAN

I have always struggled to understand the meaning of kindness as a fruit of the Spirit.

I suppose some of the reasons for my struggle have a lot to do with my upbringing and the erroneous concept of kindness that I inherited from the environment where I grew up.

Most of my childhood was spent away from both my mom and dad. Despite caring relatives, I have to admit that I did not observe good examples of the selfless kindness the Bible talks about.

I was taught to be kind to others, but I was also taught to be astute and not allow anyone to take advantage of my kindness or use it to their benefit. As a result, there was always tension between trying to be kind and not becoming a door mat or pushover. Keeping the balance was impossible, and I could only rely on my own assumptions. I didn't understand true kindness because I had yet to discover God's kindness toward me.

**When I
received
Christ, I finally
experienced
God's
irrefutable
kindness!**

Scripture describes God's kindness toward us and clearly depicts it as a vehicle to bring us to salvation through no merit of our own. God's kindness is completely undeserved: "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy" (Titus 3:4-5). When I received Christ, I finally experienced God's irrefutable kindness in my life! Now my struggle with kindness took on a new form. As a born again Christian and a young woman with a zeal for God, I had an abrasive "tough love."

Although my intentions were good, I now recognized that my truth-telling needed (and still needs) to be tempered with wisdom.

I am what southerners call a straight shooter; although I was born and raised in Honduras, that term transcends cultural barriers and suits me just like green bean casserole at a Sunday potluck.

As my faith matured, this glorious fruit of kindness continued to ripen while I also grew to understand its deep yet simplistic meaning.

First, I had to learn what kindness was not. Kindness is not weakness. It is not being a "yes" person or simply feeling sorry for someone in a bad circumstance. It is not being manipulated or coerced into doing good for others.

Kindness at its core means "useful" and to be disposed to serve others for their own good. Kindness results in action prompted by a selfless love for others. Kindness is God given; hence it is a fruit of the Spirit and not natural to our human nature.

This week I saw kindness in action.

After our second service on Sunday, I accompanied a brother and sister team from our congregation, who went to give out sandwiches to the homeless and pray for them under bridges and at street corners.

We can all agree that sharing food with the hungry is a nice thing to do, but is it kindness?

I have seen my good share of charity in the form of photo-ops, and from afar, it can be hard to distinguish if people do charitable acts because they feel good about it or if they do it for the good of someone else.

As we drove to the various bridges, I was mesmerized by the conversation between the brother and sister about their time under bridges. I watched them hug and greet homeless people like family members greet each other after many years apart. They reminisced together about old stories of cold nights as they gave out water bottles and sandwiches. As the duo ministered with tears in their eyes, I was amazed to witness the joy of the homeless to see their friends clean,

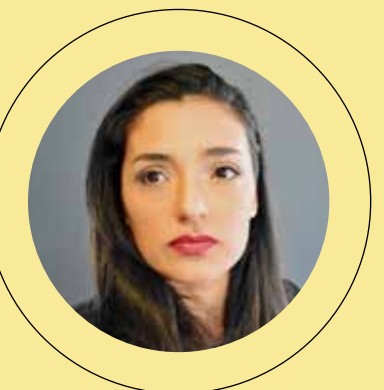
drug free, and reaching out. The tired faces were full of hope. One of the homeless men said "I am happy for you, I want to be like you when I grow up." Another one said "I will tell the others! They will not believe it."

I will not forget what I saw that day. The encounters under the bridges were not superficial acts of kindness or feel-good moments. To the brother and sister, giving out sandwiches was secondary to their desire for restoration and redemption for their friends. The driving force for this kindness is the Spirit of God; this kindness was a response to God's kindness in their own lives. Once homeless, imprisoned, addicted, and destitute in society, now they were saved and restored, and the spirit of God was producing an abundance of fruit.

My life experience may be different, but I have the same Spirit. Our congregation was a place of refuge for the siblings, specifically for the sister as she joined the church shortly after coming out of prison. This young woman found friendship and kindness in an imperfect congregation where people were striving to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

My journey to learn more about kindness continues as my relationship with God matures and deepens. I continue to be "a straight shooter," but I pray that God will season my words and actions with the kindness in action I witnessed under the bridge that day.

Carolina Guzman and her husband, Daniel, are both ordained ministers who co-pastor San Antonio Central Church of the Nazarene in San Antonio, Texas, USA.



THE FRUIT *of* THE SPIRIT *is* GOODNESS

by GORDON SMITH

Once, when I was a young child, an elderly woman leaned over me to zip up my coat on a cold winter day. “Goodness gracious, child,” she said, “you’ll catch a cold.” Her use of the word “goodness” puzzled me. What exactly did she mean? Paul’s use of the word, “goodness” (*agathosyne*) can be a bit puzzling as well.

Often, when we think of the word “goodness,” we tend to think of doing random acts of kindness: buying a cup of coffee for someone, sharing a pleasant conversation, helping a stranger change a tire, giving a friend a ride, and so on. It may be true that “goodness” (*agathosyne*) encompasses such acts of generosity, and yet, it also embodies something more. Goodness carries with it an element of moral excellence that involves building up the well-being of others.¹

Considering the aspect of moral excellence when we think about the fruit of goodness is like finding a missing puzzle piece. The colors and schemes of the other pieces begin to make sense, and one after the other, piece by piece, what once seemed puzzling now begins to fit snugly together into its proper place. Without the piece of moral excellence, our concept of goodness can easily be misunderstood.

At the heart of Paul’s message in Galatians 5 (the puzzle Paul is trying to help us put together) is the

admonition that Christians not use their freedom in Christ as an opportunity to indulge in their own selfish pursuits (5:13). Self-interested pursuits are the opposite of what is good. All sin, in some sense, is rooted in a selfish-ambition. Essentially, sin is a self-centered and self-interested love. Ultimately, it becomes an “act of self-sabotage”² that results in fractured relationships. It never builds up; it only tears down. As the Roman playwright Seneca once said, “good does not spring from evil, any more than figs grow from olive-trees.”³

Paul expresses concern to the Galatians that their newfound freedom will result in a lack of moral restraint. I like to see Paul’s dichotomy between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit as garden boundary choices for our lives. In Paul’s estimation, it is obvious what the acts of the flesh produce, and it isn’t good. Sexual immorality in all its various forms, drug induced worship (“witchcraft”), drunkenness, envy, jealousy, and hatred may purport to offer happiness but produce tragedy, brokenness, and loneliness.

One writer suggested that self-interested freedom is “like an astronaut cutting through his air hose. It’s the freedom to be lost—completely lost and alone. How much does it have to hurt before people start saying,

‘This isn’t fun anymore. . .’⁴ This isn’t good; there has to be something better than this.

In a subtle way, Paul is presenting his readers with a choice. Our options are similar to the choices Adam and Eve faced in the garden and the Israelites encountered at the threshold of the Promised Land. God has set before us: life and death, goodness and evil.

A few weeks ago, I took my children out on the lake to do some kayaking. It was good.

The sun was shining, the sky was blue, and the waters were calm. My wife and my children were leaning back in their kayaks soaking up the goodness, and it dawned on me: How many good things would have I missed had I not allowed the Spirit of God to guide my life?

The thing that is most puzzling about defining goodness is that it is not a single choice, but a series of choices that ripen over time. It is, as Eugene Peterson says, “a long obedience in the same direction.”⁵

Please don’t misunderstand me—I am certainly not promoting a pseudo-prosperity gospel about the “good” life. However, defining the word “goodness” can seem so puzzling because most good things take time to ripen, and we are often too impatient to see it. This is why the moral quality of goodness (*agathosyne*) matters. Goodness is a series

of moral choices in the right direction. It tends to ripen over time.

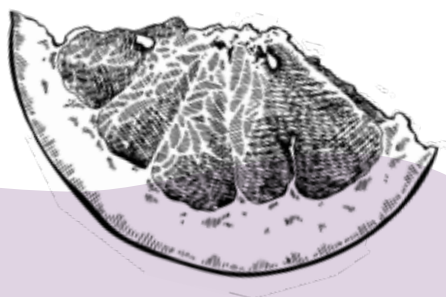
I often tell new Christians to give their lives fully to the Lord for five years, and I can guarantee they will look back, with awe, at all the good God has done in their lives. Five years will turn into a lifetime as they witness restored relationships, unforeseen opportunities to serve others in Christlike love, and even contentment with little and with much.

I have faced the consequences of pain, loneliness, and suffering that sin produces. I can still remember the day I was sitting at the bar after years of substance abuse and thinking to myself, “there has got to be something better than this.” I got up, walked out, and never returned to that lifestyle. A few days later, I knelt at the foot of my bed, and I chose life—grace, goodness—I chose Jesus! It was only the beginning in a series of choices that continue to ripen over time.

Sin has a way of fragmenting relationships and destroying what is good. Goodness, however, is a series of moral decisions that ripen over time, slowly sweetening our relationship with God and others. Over time, you’ll think back and say, “Goodness gracious... God is good!” And “goodness” won’t seem so puzzling.

Gordon Smith is senior pastor of Frankfurt First Church of the Nazarene in Frankfurt, Indiana.

Most good things take time to ripen, and we are often too impatient to see it.



1. George Lyons, “Galatians” in *New Beacon Bible Commentary* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2012), Kindle: 8886.

2. Paul J. Waddell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 165.

3. Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 517.

4. Kh. Fredrica Mathews-Green, “The Splendor of Purity” in *Healing Humanity: Confronting Our Moral Crisis* (Jordanville: Holy Trinity, 2020), 35.

5. Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2021), 200.

THE FRUIT *of* THE SPIRIT *is* FAITHFULNESS

by IAN FITZPATRICK

Galatians 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, against such things, there is no law.”

Have you ever noticed that this well-known, oft-recited verse begins with the word “But”? The conjunction is an introductory word contrasting what is coming with what has already been described. Interestingly, what has already been described in Galatians 5, just prior to the “fruit of the Spirit” section, is the works of the flesh.

Paul presents us with a list of evidences of a Spirit-filled life, and “faithfulness” is the seventh in a list of nine. Many scholars have discussed the nuances between the two words “faithfulness” and “fruitfulness.” Considering both words in tandem helps us understand “faithfulness.”

Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and

I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). We also read, “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briers. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of”

(Luke 6:43-45).

Scripture teaches us that “fruitfulness” can work both ways. We must not assume that all fruit is good. Matthew 7:20 reminds us that “false prophets” bear fruit too! So considering the word “faithful,” we hear Jesus teach: “His lord said to him, “well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things. I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matthew 25:21). These words are from a parable that Jesus taught

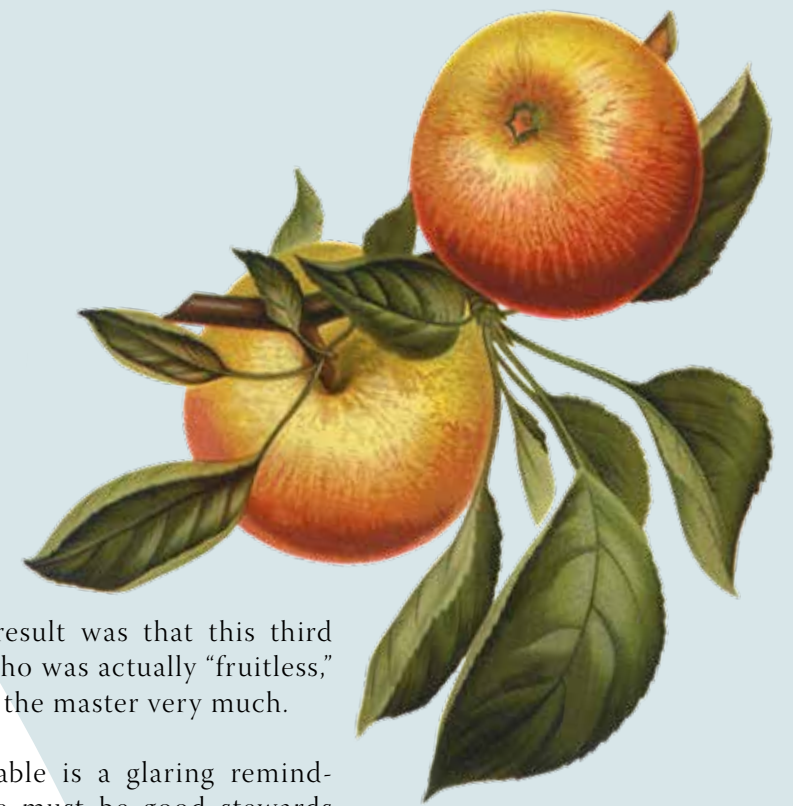
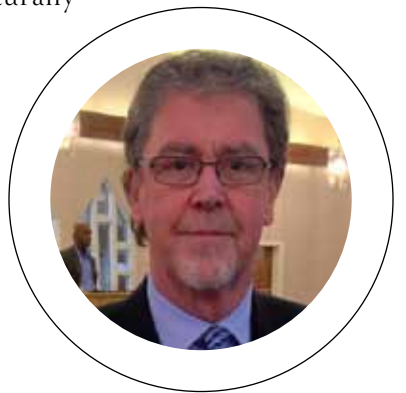
His disciples. The story actually begins with these significant words: “At that time the Kingdom of heaven will be like this” (Matthew 25:14).

Jesus goes on to tell a story about a man who went on a journey and put his servants in charge of everything. He gave one of the servants 5,000 silver coins, another received 2,000, and another, 1,000. The one who received 5,000 invested wisely and doubled the money. So too did the one who received 2,000, but the one who received 1,000 dug a hole and put the money in the ground. Upon his return, the master wanted to know what they had done with these gifts. To the two servants who had invested and “bore fruit,” the master said, “Well done you good and faithful servant. . . . Come on in and share my happiness” (Good News Version). Now we come to the third servant, and in verse 25 he tells the master, “I was afraid, so I went off and hid your money in the ground, look here is what belongs to you.” What the servant was saying may not seem all that unreasonable: *At least I didn’t lose any. There it is, just the way you gave it to me.*

The end result was that this third servant, who was actually “fruitless,” displeases the master very much.

Jesus’ parable is a glaring reminder that we must be good stewards of what God gives us. It is also a reminder that faithfulness and fruitfulness are not in competition. In fact, the parable is teaching us that there can be no faithfulness without fruitfulness and no fruitfulness without faithfulness. The master actually uses the word “faithful” to describe “fruitful” actions and then rewards the synergy provided by both. Isn’t it interesting then that “faithfulness” appears as a fruit of the Spirit, and if you squeeze it, it oozes the juice of loyalty and dependability and other godly traits. If you squeeze it even harder, out comes the fruitful evidence that the Spirit of the living God resides in one’s heart and life, thereby very naturally fulfilling the law.

Ian Fitzpatrick is national director of the Church of the Nazarene Canada.



THE FRUIT *of* THE SPIRIT *is* GENTLENESS

by SAMANTHA CHAMBO

I have a counselor-friend whose favorite words to me are: “Be gentle with yourself.” Sometimes, her encouragement frustrates me because I am so desperate for change that I regularly try to whip myself into shape. However, I have found that I am most likely to experience progress when I take her advice. There appears to be a strange, enigmatic power that effects change when gentleness is present.

I have learned that God is gentle when dealing with human weakness. In Isaiah 40:10-11, we see God coming with power to bring change to Israel. However, the way He does it seems contrary. “He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.” This beautiful picture of God tenderly and gently caring for His people is found in a chapter laden with references to God’s power and might. Yet He chooses to tend to His people in gentleness. Scripture tells us that God’s approach is motivated by His compassion for Israel. The gentleness of God toward His people is an expression of His love and graciousness.

In the New Testament, Jesus exhibits the same approach as the Father. In Matthew 11:28-29, Jesus said: “Come to me all of you that are weary and

a carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” The gentleness of Jesus reveals his compassion toward us. He is deeply moved by our suffering and chooses to use His strength on our behalf. When Jesus healed and forgave sins, and when He raised people from the dead, He used His power and strength on behalf of the people He loved.

This gentleness is not weakness; it stands up to injustice and oppression. Jesus fought calmly and without hesitation on behalf of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). He delivered the demon-possessed man (Matthew 5:1-20). He allowed the woman with an issue of blood to appropriate His power for her healing (Luke 8:43-48). Jesus did not wield His power for self-elevation but to uplift the lowly.

The supreme example of transformative gentleness is the disposition of Jesus when He faced and endured the cross. “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, he did not open his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). Jesus must have appeared very pathetic as He suffered in silence and even

forgave those who tortured Him. However, this humiliation of Christ was the single most powerful event in the history of creation. By it, the destruction of Eden is reversed, and humans are reconciled to God.

Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit in the lives of believers (Galatians 5:23). This makes sense when we consider gentleness as a characteristic of the triune God. The apostle Paul tells us that the love and compassion of the Father and the Son is poured out in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. Love enables us to treat others with kindness, tenderness, and humility. It enables us to delay judgment and fills us with empathy and gentleness.

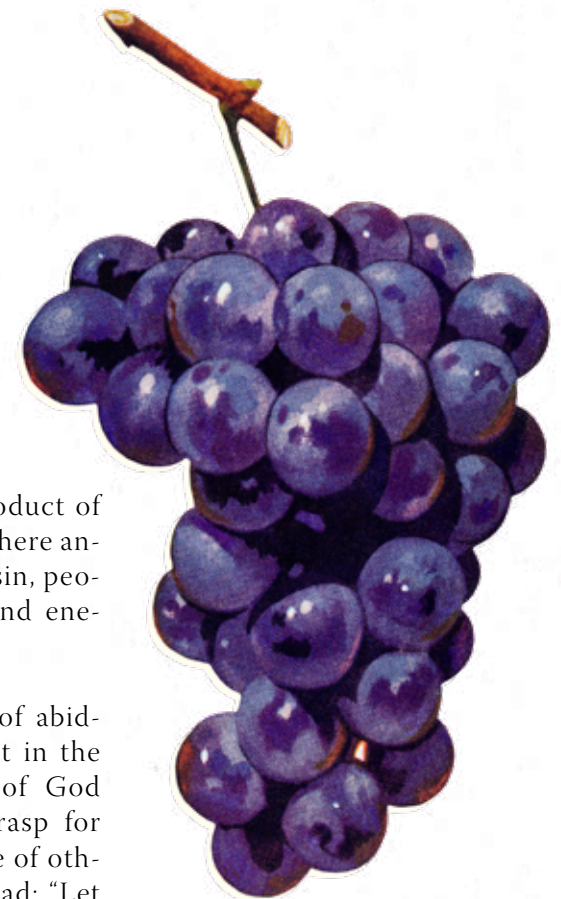
Personal transformation becomes a real possibility when we choose to live in a disposition of gentleness. Our witness could be so much more effective if we exchange self-assertion for gentleness. A gentle response can diffuse a volatile situation (Proverbs 15:1), lead opponents to repentance (2 Timothy 2:25), and even increase our persuasiveness (Proverbs 16:21). This strategy to effect change is very different from the culture around us, where self-assertion, self-confidence, and dominance are valued. Gentleness

is countercultural; it is a product of the upside-down kingdom where anger does not have to lead to sin, people turn the other cheek, and enemies are loved.

True gentleness is a result of abiding in Christ. Absolute trust in the goodness and faithfulness of God frees us from a need to grasp for what we need at the expense of others. In Philippians 4:5 we read: “Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.” Assurance of the nearness of Christ allows me to be gentle to all, excluding none.

Can you imagine the greatest benefit of listening to my counselor-friend’s advice? Being gentle with myself has helped me to be gentler with others. The strange, enigmatic power of gentleness is that it begets gentleness. In a spirit of gentleness, the meek will inherit the earth.

Samantha Chambo is a preacher and a teacher. She and her husband live in Kansas City.



**True
gentleness
is a result
of abiding
in Christ.**



THE FRUIT of THE SPIRIT is SELF-CONTROL

by SCOTT SHERWOOD



The irony is not lost on me that a lifetime yo-yo dieter would be asked to write this article on self-control. While I have never been a gluttonous over-eater, I am living proof that eating a couple hundred extra calories each day more than you burn will result in an additional 20 pounds in a year. Stop exercising and start enjoying an Italian combo sweet-hot mozz dipped with fries—even occasionally—and you'll pack that 20 on a lot quicker!

Whether the issue is exercising more and eating less, saving more and spending less, working more and playing less, listening more and talking less, or giving more and taking less, our self-control or lack thereof will make itself known in myriad ways throughout our lives. Most of us are encouraged from a very young age to delay gratification and to subjugate the desire for things we want now to the promise of more valuable things we will want later.

When my daughters were very young, they had a favorite store in the mall. Whenever they had a

little money to spend, that particular store was a destination of choice. I was mildly grieved that they wasted money on items that would be more fun to buy than to own. It was a small matter of nickels and dimes, but small behaviors become big habits over time. I finally made a deal with them. I would only take them to this store if they agreed to call it by its proper name: "cheap junk that keeps you from saving up for good stuff."

Our self-control or lack thereof will make itself known in myriad ways.

Self-control is not a uniquely Christian virtue. The ancient Greek philosophers mentioned self-control more often than the biblical writers and considered it to be the ultimate guarantor of freedom, which was commonly understood to be the pinnacle of human striving. Self-control is necessary for self-sovereignty, but Christianity is not concerned with self-sovereignty; it is concerned with Jesus as Lord of all.

Self-control, listed in Galatians 5:23, is one aspect of character that John Wesley insists is a singular fruit of the Spirit. The qualities that form

the fruit of the Spirit are not self-initiated but are the result of the Spirit's work in one's life and constitute together the ultimate proof of one's sanctification. Wesley insists that when this "constellation of graces" is "united together in the soul of a believer, this is Christian perfection."¹

Virtue is not something God requires from Christians; virtue is something God promises to us. Self-control, or any other aspect of the fruit of the Spirit, is not a performance to be perfected but a presence to be practiced. Where the Spirit of God is consistently present and permitted unfettered access, the qualities of the triune God are kneaded deep into the soil of our soul and become the distinguishing marks of our identity.

When we find ourselves falling short in any aspect of the fruit of the Spirit, our challenge is not how to do better in achieving that particular virtue but how to do better at practicing the presence of the Spirit. When I lack self-control, it is an early warning that I am not depending on the Spirit's presence.

A lack of self-control manifests itself differently in different people. For some, it is a propensity toward anger or violence; for others, it is lust and sexual temptation; and for many like me, it is exercising too little and eating too much. Am I saying it is just as serious to eat too much as it is to practice sexual immorality or to lash out in anger? I don't know. I do know Paul says, which Wesley

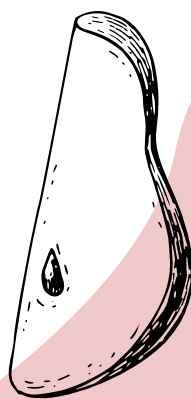
echoes, that these all have the same spiritual cause.

In my many attempts to lose some weight once and for all, I have learned a few lessons. One of them is that if I will fill up on good stuff first, it is a lot easier for me to say no to the bad stuff. If I get too empty, pretty much any fill-up will eventually do.

Isn't this the secret to the Spirit-filled life? Isn't this what John Wesley's means of grace are all about? When we fill up on the Spirit early and often, we are so much less prone to settle for any of the enemy's many cheap alternatives.

By saying yes first and always to the presence and promptings of the Holy Spirit, I am freed from burning all of my energy in debating choices that should be long ago settled. What is more, all of that energy becomes available to explore the soaring possibilities of seeking to fulfill my Kingdom potential in this life. Saying no to sin and the baser instincts of the human condition will be immensely difficult only so long as saying yes is still an option.

Scott Sherwood is the president of Nazarene Bible College.



1. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, Third Edition, vol. 6 (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872), 413–414.

WHEN YOU'RE NOT SURE WHERE THIS IS GOING

by CARLA SUNBERG



A hopeful future was playing out before they could ever leave the refugee camp. It was a hot Sunday morning in Gambella, Ethiopia, and the church was filled with a mass of humanity that had been on a journey to escape the violence of South Sudan. Never quite knowing where they were going, they had learned to trust in God, step-by-step, and day-by-day.



SITTING in a nice little apartment in Johannesburg, South Africa in November 2018, I began to reflect on a weekend that I had spent in Ethiopia, near the border with South Sudan. The war in Sudan has created hundreds of thousands of refugees, many of whom have been living in camps in this region.

On that Sunday morning in Gambella, Ethiopia there was no time to discuss the politics of the war-torn region, but simply the opportunity to look around and realize that we were not sure how the Church of the Nazarene got here, but God was in our midst. The churchyard was filled with at least 100 children, some of whom had been orphaned. They were having Sunday school and learning about Jesus. Their smiles were beautiful.



Still today, in the midst of such difficult conditions, we aren't sure what the future holds for this burgeoning group of new believers, but we are committed to walk beside them as they follow the leading and the prompting of the Spirit.

We aren't sure what the future holds for this burgeoning group of new believers, but we are committed to walk beside them...

In the book of Acts we discover that the disciples were also learning about the journey that had no clear end in sight. Peter "went here and there among all the believers." Traveling to Lydda, he found a man named Aeneas, who had been paralyzed for eight years. Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed!" Immediately he got up. And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord" (Acts 6:34-35, NRSV).

It is Dr. Luke who writes about this incident, which set the stage for the expansion of the ministry to the Gentiles. Peter had a vision that eventually led him to the house of Cornelius. Like breadcrumbs on the pathway, Peter was simply following the leading of the Spirit as he ministered. The New Testament church was about to explode with new converts. But at this moment in the journey, Peter had no idea what the

future held. Peter might not have known where the path was leading, but he did know that he would never take personal credit for what was happening. All the glory belonged to Jesus.

Likewise, the Spirit of God has been at work in the refugee camps in Sudan; in one camp alone I learned that there were 17 Nazarene churches. It had been eight years since the last General Superintendent, Dr. Stan Toler, had visited this area to ordain one person as the onlookers rejoiced. In the years since, believers have set up pastoral education right in the refugee camps, and on that day I was to ordain 24 individuals as elders or deacons. Unfortunately, because of roadblocks, two couldn't make it.

As the day continued to warm up, we enjoyed the beauty of Christian worship and fellowship. Jesus was lifted up as the people sang and danced and praised the Lord. Regional Director Daniel Gomis shared the scriptural story of the young exiles, Daniel and his three friends. The Bible tells us those young men, living as refugees, did everything they could to be faithful servants of God. When the young people in Ethiopia heard the story of Daniel's friends and the fiery furnace, they flocked to the front of the church to commit themselves to faithfully follow Jesus, even as refugees in a foreign land.

When it came time for the ordination, I was overwhelmed. Where had God led me? To a hot and dry land filled with struggle, and there I saw Jesus. Jesus

was in the face of every ordinand. For the first time ever, women were ordained in the Horn of Africa; we ordained sixteen women and six men. I watched them, some with visible physical ailments, one with TB, covenanting to serve the Lord and the Church. The joyful celebration that followed is like nothing I've ever seen before, as the people rejoiced knowing that God's hand was upon their lives.

I am learning to be careful of questioning where God may be leading, even when circumstances are difficult. We may just find Jesus is in the midst of something we don't understand. Peter had no idea how his journeys would change his life and the future of the church. He lived on, in faith, following the nudging of the Holy Spirit every single day.

As I traveled the African continent, pre-COVID, I had the privilege of encountering shining examples of Jesus in the people of South Sudan and Ethiopia. I wasn't sure where I was going, but I think I found heaven on earth.



Scan the code to experience part of this service with Dr. Sunberg.

HEALTHIER SOIL *and* HIGHER YIELDS



CHISOMO, 25, is in her second year of farming using conservation agriculture techniques. After the first year, she was so pleased with the results that she doubled the size of her plot from half an acre to a full one.

Through partnership, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, and Growing Hope Globally have been teaching conservation agriculture techniques in Malawi, where Chisomo lives. The system allows for improved food production for small-scale farmers like Chisomo through minimal soil disturbance, organic soil cover, and crop diversification. The land stays fertile and farmers increase their long-term yields. So far, they've trained and resourced more than 1,000 farmers. As people

learn that the project is affiliated with Nazarene churches, attendance grows as well.

After Chisomo harvests seeds from her field, she meticulously selects those that are good and carefully stores them for the next planting season. In these small seeds, she says she sees a future where she and her family have regular access to enough nutritious food.

"I can struggle with food, but this is my future," she shares.

In Malawi, around 80 percent of the population lives as smallholder farmers—farmers of land less than five acres in size. Margret, a mother of four who was widowed, has a one-acre farm. She started using conservation agriculture techniques about a year ago. As the source of both food and income, the family's plot was cherished. Changing to a new method wasn't without risk, but Margret decided to do it after seeing her friend's higher yields.

"Doing conservation agriculture was a gamble because it's my first time to do it," Margret explains. "Today I am a happy farmer because the same land that was giving me two ox carts [of crops] has given me four. I look forward to growing next season."

This article was originally published in NCM Magazine, 2021 Issue 1.

why FOOD SECURITY *instead of* HUNGER RELIEF?

The answer is all in the definition. Food security means that people have physical, social, and economic access to enough safe, nutritious food. In other words, it's being able to live both without hunger itself and without the fear of hunger.

Many of the food security programs Nazarene Compassionate Ministries supports also establish savings groups. These groups provide a secure way to plan for the future; participants can securely save as well as take out small loans to expand their fields, purchase seeds, or start small businesses. Thus, projects that address access to food and economic stability are sustainable in more ways than one.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



Peru Nazarenes pay tribute to missionary Addie Garman

Addie Garman, a missionary who served in Peru for more than 45 years, was laid to rest at the Nuevo Horizonte Mission Station during a memorial service attended by over a thousand people.



SCAN NOW
to read the
full story



California pastor rescues cars, souls through 'ministry on wheels'

A Nazarene pastor in Los Angeles, California, who also works as a tow truck driver has been sharing the love of Jesus Christ during his service calls since 2014. Through his "ministry on wheels," he has led over 20 people to the Lord.



SCAN NOW
to read the
full story



Cabo Verde celebrates 120 years

The Church of the Nazarene in Cabo Verde recently celebrated its 120th anniversary. Under the leadership of General Superintendent Eugénio Duarte, attendees remembered the past, analysed the present, and looked toward the future.



SCAN NOW
to read the
full story

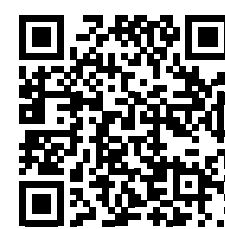
MOVING MINISTERS

Compiled by the General Secretary's Office from district reports, Moving Ministers is a monthly listing of Nazarene ministers in new assignments on the USA/Canada Region.



IN MEMORIAM

In Memoriam is a listing (updated weekly) of Nazarene ministers and leaders who have gone home to be with the Lord.



To receive stories like these in your inbox each week, sign up at nazarene.org/news



YOUR PASTOR
NEEDS A
BETTER
RETIREMENT!

The 2021 report of the Social Security and Medicare Boards of Trustees was not a rosy one. In essence, it stated Federal retirement and survivors benefits are expected to run short in 2033, with a possible 24% reduction. Additionally, the fund for Medicare part A, which covers hospital stays, will face trouble even sooner, with possible reductions of 9% in 2026¹.

These projections point to the serious need for every pastor to be involved in setting aside funds for the future through the Nazarene 403(b) Retirement Savings Plan.

Like a 401(k) or regular IRA, a Nazarene 403(b) allows ministers to avoid taxes on funds set aside now either through employer contributions or employee deferrals from salary. Unlike a 401(k) or regular IRA, at retirement, 403(b) distributions may be received as tax-free housing allowance². This can result in significant savings.

With recent record growth in retirement plan earnings³, now is an excellent time to get

involved or to increase the amount of contributions to the Nazarene 403(b) plan. By the way, starting as a young minister is even better because it allows more time for earnings to compound through the years.

Pastors may phone **888-888-4656** to get started. To increase contributions, visit Fidelity's netbenefits.com or talk to your church treasurer. Learn more by visiting our 403(b) Retirement section under Benefit Plans at pbusa.org. We'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.

¹ A Summary of the 2021 Annual Reports – Social Security and Medicare Boards of Trustees (see [SSA.gov](https://ssa.gov) for details).

² See *P&B-Provided Benefits Guide* at pbusa.org for details.

³ Past performance is no guarantee of future earnings. Investment involves risk, including the risk of loss.



Pensions and Benefits USA
Church of the Nazarene

More than a Century of Serving Those Who Serve

17001 PRAIRIE STAR PARKWAY • LENEXA, KS 66220-7900
PBUSA.ORG • PENSIONS@NAZARENE.ORG • 888-888-4656



HOLINESS TODAY

**Together
we can
grow
funds
for
future
ministry.**

Open an **Investment
Management Account**
with the
Nazarene Foundation
and watch your ministry
resources grow.

www.nazarenefoundation.org
info@nazarenefoundation.org

