



Bible Study: Fruits of the Spirit

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23

'Gladness and Generosity' sounds to some, at first glance, like it should be the easiest and happiest of subjects. It somehow speaks of a carefree and joyous life, skipping along merrily and helping out those who are in trouble. Living a glad and generous life is, at least for most of us, something that benefits us as much as it benefits those around us on whom it has an impact. However, it is important that we remember those struggling with depression or mental health who really do struggle to be glad and generous, probably not through any fault of their own.

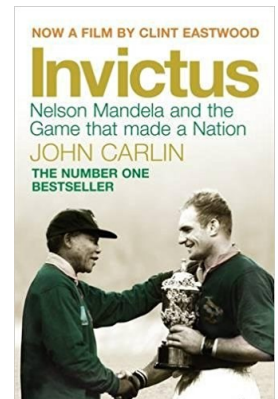
Although they are not the specific words that are used in Galatians 5:22-23, Gladness and Generosity seem to be essentially entwined within the fruit of the spirit which Paul talks about in the passage. Another way of putting this is that as the spirit works in us, we should be become more glad and more generous (along with all of the other fruits of the spirit mentioned). Christians and the churches that they make up should therefore be places full of gladness and full of generosity, as the spirit works within the body of Christ. This brings us back to the passage which is at the heart of the Holy Habits programme, Acts 2:42-47, where we see the early church growing and being filled with gladness and generosity (amongst many other things).

Questions to ponder

1. In the Galatians passage it lists what Paul calls the "Fruit of the Spirit". With which of these do you think you most naturally fit? Are there any of them you think you struggle with?
2. How does this fit with your experience and understanding of the concepts of gladness and generosity? Do you think they are things we can practice and grow in?
3. What is the Holy Spirit's role in helping us change and grow? How do we ask for and receive His help?
4. How does your experience of the fruits of the Spirit now compare with how the Holy Spirit is at work in the Holy Habits passage at the end of Acts 2 which we read?
5. What could we learn from how the Holy Spirit is at work at the end of Acts 2? Do you think that people growing in the fruits of the Spirit is a big or small part of why the early church was growing so fast?

Non-Fiction Book

- **Invictus**

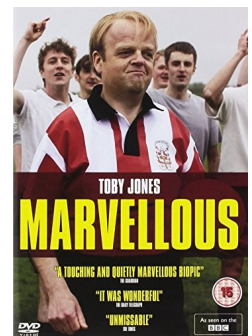


John Carlin

The story of the amazing generosity of Nelson Mandela in reaching out to the resentful and racist world of white South African rugby before the 1995 World Cup.

DVD (Borrow from the Wesley Room)

- **Marvellous**



BAFTA-winning, feel good film by the BBC. A film based on the life of Neil Baldwin, a man considered to have learning difficulties. Regardless of that fact, Baldwin sets off with an appetite for life, becoming kit-man of his favourite football team, a lay preacher, and getting on the Queen's Christmas Card list.



Giving

When thinking about Generosity it seems appropriate to at least touch on the subject of financial and material generosity as well as giving within the church context. The following, although without written evidence, has often been attributed to John Wesley: “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.”

It is important that as we think about this we remember that everything belongs to God, something Wesley was passionate in talking about. Taking this into consideration changes the way we think about money, about possessions, and about what we do with them. In this way it could change the way we use what we have. It might make us consider how often we give people a lift in ‘our cars’, how generous we are with who stays in ‘our houses’, or indeed how often we invite people in to share ‘our food’ at ‘our table’. What a radical (and challenging) change in mind-set to the one our society works with normally, to think of everything as God’s not ours.

This challenge then must also apply to ‘our money’ - including how we spend it, how we save it, how we invest it, and how we give it away. Acquiring money in itself is not a useful goal for us to have in life, but, acquiring it to spend, to save, to invest and to give away wisely, all in partnership with God, is a healthy Christian way of life. Ultimately, when talking about giving the amount of money we have isn’t of importance; it’s the partnership with God and the way we use it that is vital to enjoying what we have been given and sharing it for the enjoyment of others.

Perhaps take a little time to sit down and pray about your possessions and finances - maybe even think about your most precious resource, your time, as well. They are God’s good gifts to you. How can you use them for his glory? Are there people you could be generous toward with them? You could also think about your giving to your church or together with others think about how your church is generous to its community.

Most importantly, remember to be glad in your generosity. In 2 Corinthians 9:7 it says “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

For Personal Reflection from Andrew Roberts

Take some time to reflect on your practising of gladness. If life is tough at the moment and gladness seems elusive, spend some time with someone who is in a tough place at the moment and maybe give them a simple gift such as cake or flowers. Often a good way to regain gladness is to give gladness.

Spend some time simply praying the lines from the Lord’s Prayer: “forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us”. As you pray them slowly over and over, ask the Spirit to give you the grace to forgive those who have hurt you.

