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Harvesting the Fruit of Agapao Leadership

My purpose for this chapter is to show you how the Fruit of the Spirit can help you measure how much a leader lives by spiritual principles. At the risk of offending some traditional Bible scholars in this essay, I will take a different path of Scripture interpretation.

First, let me say that there is precious little material to help the common man or woman understand the Fruit of the Spirit passages found in chapter five of Paul's letter to the Galatians. I have found several books that attempt to show how the fruit results from accepting Christ, and I have found a few books written for the professional Bible scholar that provide little to no practical application of Scripture.

The one exception to this dearth of research is Ghezzi's (1987) book. Therefore, much of what you find in this essay is my understanding of the fifth chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians. Let us first examine the purpose of this passage. Why does Paul take time to write about

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these things? The church at Galatia was undergoing a difficult period during which many Jewish Christians believed that the Old Testament laws were binding on the New Testament Church. As a result of much in-fighting, the church (some say many churches) faced radical division among its members. Paul learned that it was more than just legal interpretation that had infected the church. People who had accepted Jesus as the Messiah and who had started to live by His teaching were falling away from the spiritual principles and were returning to a sinful nature.

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), Jesus taught the Jewish community that if they lived according to the principles laid down by God; there would be little need for man to make laws and regulations. At the beginning of Galatians Chapter Five, Paul is instructing the members of the churches about this same topic. Paul reminds the church that it is free, in Christ, to live peacefully, and he admonishes them for not living a life according to spiritual principles. To illustrate the difference between the way the church members live and how they ought to live, Paul describes both.

In Galatians 5:19, Paul describes the characteristics of a life grounded in a sinful nature. He mentions sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissension, factions and envy, drunkenness, and orgies and the like.

He then describes the characteristics of the spiritually principled life based on love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—or the Fruits of the Spirit.

These characteristics are the result of a life lived according to spiritual principles, not a result of labor or works. These characteristics, or qualities, parallel The Beatitudes found in Matthew 5. The Beatitudes describe the inward traits and principles that a godly person possesses. The nine Fruit of the Spirit represents the measurable outward manifestation of living a life led by spiritual principles. Much debate has ensued over the past several centuries as to what Paul meant by the Fruit of the Spirit. Some say that fruit is a singular word and, therefore, all the terms that follow are simply different ways to describe love. Others say that fruit is also plural, and, therefore, the terms describe different aspects of fervent spiritual life.

A simple look at the Greek in this passage does not support a restrictive interpretation. Rather, the passage is quite simple, and yet very powerful. Paul contrasts the outward characteristics of a life following a sinful nature with a life following a spiritual nature. Paul says nothing that we could interpret about restricting a life based on the spiritual principles to only those who follow Jesus. Some writers claim that Christian virtue comes only from the Holy Spirit. Paul does not say that in this passage. He does say that living out the sinful nature is contrary to living by the Spirit. The Greek word that we translate as spirit is *pneuma*, which means “ghost, life, spirit, angel, and divine spirit” (Strong’s word 4151). *Pneuma* occurs throughout the New Testament when referring to spirit.

Let’s dig deeper beginning with the word fruit since it seems to cause so much trouble for some people. The Greek word *karpos* implies a literal or figurative fruit that someone plucks from a tree or plant (Strong’s word 2590). This word implies a fruit deliberately harvested in contrast to a fruit that is not domesticated or sought by someone. The Greek word implies both the single and plural form just as the English word fruit could mean a basket of golden apples, mixed apples, or mixed fruit. We in the United States think of apples as fruit. In Paul’s time, in Asia Minor where the Galatian churches existed, the grape or fig would be a better symbol for fruit. The word implies something that is the result of growth and care that eventually results in a harvest.

A good harvest occurs because the grower follows the principles of good agriculture and because God provides timely rains and appropriate environmental conditions for excellent growth. Nothing grows because of the law. Regarding Paul’s fruit analogy, let’s think of the fruit as a bunch of grapes for a moment. The grapes provide evidence of the type of vine that is supporting their growth. The appearance and quality of the grapes may even give evidence of the vine grower and the vineyard.

Fruit is the result of a process. Grapes, for example, do not just appear one day on a vine. They must first be planted, then they must be provided with proper nutrients, and given the right environment in which to grow. But once this is done, the fruit naturally grows. Still, there is more process. The grapes form as buds and then develop into fruit. Likewise, when we walk in the Spirit, we are compelled to do as

the Spirit would do, not because we force ourselves through good works to bear good fruit, but because it comes naturally through the Spirit. When we live according to scriptural principles, we will produce good fruit. It's not us alone, though; it's through Him. The fruit is His characteristic, not our own. We produce good fruit as a result of the Vine to which we are attached, and because our Vine provides us with wonderful nutrients, not to mention life itself.

The Clustering of the Fruit of the Spirit

Scripture is fascinating in that there are so many relationships and groupings of ideas and concepts. The Fruit of the Spirit are clustered in groups of three. The first cluster of three includes (1) love, (2) joy, and (3) peace. The second cluster includes (4) patience, (5) kindness, and (6) goodness. The third cluster includes (7) faithfulness, (8) gentleness, and (9) self-control. Of further interest is the relationship of each group to the whole. The first group represents a macro aspect of relationship and behavior. One might say that it represents the fruit of man relating to God. The second group represents a mid-range concept of how a man might relate to society or other groups of people. The last set of three fruits represents a micro view of the fruit that develops when one relates to another using scriptural principles. Although there is little written on this subject, I encourage you to consider these clusters of fruit as they hang on the Vine of life. Consider the fruit as an element of its group as you work through each of the following nine fruits.

Love (Man Relating to God)

We should examine each fruit in sequence to fully understand its significance. The first is love. Love, as used here, comes from the Greek word *agape*, which is the strongest of the four Greek words that translate into love. Each of the individual meanings of the word love includes: *eros*, *philos*, *agapao*, and *agape*. Jesus used the term *agape* when He referred

to God's love for us. The first type of love that is mentioned in the Fruits of the Spirit is Agape love, a self-sacrificing love characterized by one giving of oneself so that another may be blessed. The giver expects nothing in return or as a result of the behavior. This is God-like love for us, and it makes it easier to understand how the word Agape also translates into "a love feast." A love feast is exactly the type of love that God wants to experience with us. Don't let modern images rush to your mind, we are talking about an abundance of pure, undefiled, selfless love streaming from the cross of Calvary to us today.

Joy (Managers Relating to God)

Paul lists joy as the second characteristic of living by spiritual principles. The Greek word that we translate into joy is chara, which encompasses exceeding joy, cheerfulness, and calm (Strong's word 5479) Paul used the same word in Romans 14:17; 15:13, 32; and Philippians 1:4, 25. There are over 50 references to chara in the New Testament. Other translations of joy come from the Greek words agalliasis (Strong's word 20) and euphrosune meaning "gladness" (Strong's word 2167).

Joy is the second of the three macro-fruits referring to the leader's relationship with God. The fruit, though, is also demonstrated in the leader's outward behavior toward people in the workplace. Man's relationship with God is often mirrored in his behavior toward others.

When a leader lives by spiritual principles, there is always a sense of calmness about him or her. When stress and pressure surround the workplace, employees always gravitate to the leader who lives by the Spirit, for in that leader there is a sense of calm. The leader who lives by spiritual principles exhibits cheerfulness in all situations and has a kind word for any occasion.

When difficult projects begin to weigh heavily on the minds of employees, the leader's first reaction should be to bring a sense of calm and lightness to the workplace. I remember a time when my company bought a competing company. During the transition period, there was a great deal of stress in the new subsidiary. I remember one of the

leaders who stayed on after the purchase asking me when I thought the transition time would be over. I told him he would know it when he heard laughter in the pressroom. He nodded and commented that there had not been a sense of joy in the workplace for many years. Six weeks later, the same leader walked by my office and stopped to tell me that he had just heard pressmen laughing. He noticed that they all were going about their work cheerfully. The leader smiled, said “Thanks,” and continued with his work.

Deming (2000), in his book, *The New Economics*, taught countless companies in post-WWII that living by his 14 principles would result in joy in the workplace. Deming, a strong Christian, used Scripture at selected times to support his concepts. I believe that Deming considered the Greek word *chara* when he said workers would experience “joy.”

Joy does not always mean hilarity. There is a sense of control in a workplace that has a spiritually led leader. By joy, one might envision people waking up in the morning with a sense of happiness and a positive expectation of what will happen at work that day. As I begin to understand more of the spiritual principles and attempt to live by them, I notice the changes in my workplace and in the people I manage. On several instances, I have found employees coming to work on their days off or vacation days. When I asked them why they have come to the office, each answered in a like manner, “I wanted to get this project finished. Besides, I enjoy being here.” Joy is a ‘communicable’ condition. It infects those around you. This characteristic is closely aligned with the next characteristic—peace. This fruit is one of the three macro fruits that deal with a relationship with God. When a leader enjoys a strong relationship with God, there is an outgrowth of joy and happiness to all others in the workplace.

Peace (Managers Relating to God)

Paul uses the Greek word *eirene* here, and again in 2 Timothy 2:22, to imply quietness and rest (Strong’s word 1515). We find peace used 88 times in the New Testament. Eighty-six of these occurrences are the word *eirene*. Other words that the King James Bible uses for the word

peace are sigao (Strong's word 4601) and hesuchazo, (Strong's word 2270) which mean, to hold silent or keep peace.

One of the principles described by Jesus in The Beatitudes is Blessed are the peacemakers. Paul's use of eirene follows Jesus' teaching that peace is the result of other behaviors and activities. Peace must be created and sustained. It is noteworthy that in The Beatitudes the word for peacemaker is eirenopoios, meaning, to do peace (Strong's word 1518) Paul uses the noun form of the same word that Jesus used as a verb.

Eirene builds upon the concept of calm found in the chara. It is interesting to see how the Fruits of the Spirit build upon each other. Since peace is the last of the macro cluster illustrating the leader's relationship with God, it is interesting to see how having peace with God develops into a relationship with people. Employees seek to work for leaders when peace abounds in the workplace. I interviewed a senior leader at the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) who, I believed, exemplified this concept of peace. He had worked for CBN longer than most and seemed to survive a lot of the ups and downs that a major organization undergoes. As a part of my interviewing process, I talked with people who worked for this leader and with others who knew people who had worked for him. I felt that if I went beyond the first circle of employees, I would better understand him. What I found was that a sense of peace surrounded all of this leader's activities. His employees demonstrated the lowest turnover in the organization. There was even a list of people who wanted to work for him. Everyone agreed that more work was accomplished in his department than in most others, yet there was little evidence of stress or overburdened work conditions. His department was busy but peaceful. Employees told me that they felt more rested after a day's work than when they began. Some described what he did as miraculous; I described it as eirene.

Employees can easily spot leaders who live by spiritual principles. These leaders are the people that others turn to in times of strife and trouble, or to learn the truth about the organization. These leaders bring about a sense of order amid the chaos of organizational change. It is only out of peace that one can have patience.

Patience (Managers Relating to Others in Society)

Paul uses the Greek word *makrothumi* to refer to our word *patience* (Strong's word 3115). The King James translation uses the word *long-suffering*, which we might translate today into "forbearance." Another definition that we could use is "fortitude." Paul also uses *makrothumi* in 2 Timothy 3:10 and Colossians 3:12. Paul also used the word *makrothumi* in Romans 2:4, 9:22; 2 Corinthians 6:6; and Ephesians 4:2. It's important to not assign a 'poor me' attitude to the word *patience*, perhaps because of the King James 'long suffering' inference. But there is nothing 'poor me' about living a life according to spiritual principles.

I encourage you to consider the combined definitions of *fortitude* and *patience*. You can recognize leaders who live by spiritual principles because they understand the concept of time and seasons. There is a time to plant, to tend, to wait, and to harvest. Isaiah understood this characteristic when he wrote, "but those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (40:31). Isaiah used the Hebrew word *qavah*, meaning "to wait patiently" or "to look patiently" (Strong's word 06960). I believe that we can tie this to the Greek word *kairos* meaning "the opportune time" (Strong's word 2540). *Patience* is an observable characteristic of waiting for the right time to act and never rushing an event or person.

Leaders who live by spiritual principles demonstrate *patience* when working with employees. This fruit, *patience*, is the first fruit that deals with our relationships with other people. *Patience* is not an all-encompassing acceptance of what employees do, but rather it's an understanding that all people learn and develop at different rates of speed. Leaders also know that after a new program is inaugurated, it needs time to grow without constant intervention. Many times, employees describe leaders who exhibit *patience* as "caring about people." While these leaders certainly care for people, it is probably even more accurate that the leader is simply *patient* with employees. Another word that employees use to describe *patient* leaders is *gentle*.

Auden (1990) wrote in his 1962 poem, *The Dyer's Hand*:

Perhaps there is only one cardinal sin: impatience. Because of impatience we were driven out of Paradise, because of impatience we cannot return. Patience is the result of understanding the “when” as well as the “how.”

When I think of this fruit, I see leaders who do not live by spiritual principles pushing people to make sales too early, to ship products too soon, or to try to perform new tasks before completing all the necessary training. I see the Challenger shuttle disaster. I see product recalls that could have been avoided. I see the Ford Pinto. I see airline leaders pushing pilots and locomotive engineers operating their equipment without enough rest. I see accidents that could have been avoided. Evidence of this fruit is reflected in having patience to see that everything is as it should be.

Gentleness (Managers Relating to Others in Society)

Paul continues the descriptive passage with the Greek word *chrestotes* (Strong's word 5544). We translate *chrestotes* as “being kind or excellent in character.” Jesus described just such a person in the Samaritan who helped the injured traveler after the thieves robbed him and the priests ignored him. The only other word found in the New Testament that we translate, as “gentleness” is the Greek word *pieikeia*, meaning “mildness” (Strong's word 1932).

Leaders who live by spiritual principles might exhibit behaviors that others would describe as kindness, gentleness, or be of excellent character. A leader might demonstrate this characteristic by finding a job in the organization for an employee who had difficulty performing their assigned duties. Rather than firing the employee, the leader might seek a job commensurate with the employee's skills.

If it was necessary to terminate an employee, a leader who lived by spiritual principles might seek a way to ease the employee out of the workplace rather than fire the person in front of others. Unfortunately,

gentleness is not a characteristic that many of today's organizations think leaders should possess. A recent book on the subject of 'bosses from hell' described a leader who enjoyed firing people. This leader would tape a picture of the fired employee on the employee's chair and make rude remarks to the picture for several days after the termination.

A leader might exhibit gentleness by easing change into an organization. Ansoff described a concept called the 'Accordion Method' of change whereby leaders introduced incremental measures of change and allowed employees to adjust to the change before introducing more. Employees could easily describe this type of leader as being gentle and good.

Goodness (Managers Relating to Others in Society)

The Greek word *agathosune* (Strong's word 19), used here for goodness, also translates into virtue or "beneficence." The American Heritage Dictionary defines beneficence as the state or quality of being kind, charitable, or beneficial.

The concept of goodness found in the Greek word brings with it an understanding that the goodness must be good for something. There are only four occasions where we see *agathosune* used in the New Testament: Romans 15:14; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 5:9; and 2 Thessalonians 1:11.

Leaders might exhibit this fruit by showing more interest in the well-being of employees rather than in the bottom line. This is not to say that there is no concern for fiscal responsibility, but rather that leaders living by spiritual principles must value people above money. This definition includes the word beneficial. This implies that a leader's actions, while charitable to the employee(s), also must be for the greatest good of all. Looking at goodness and patience, we can see many similarities, thus supporting the logic of the group of three fruits that all center on how we treat each other as humans. Gentleness can also be viewed as goodness. Gentleness can become a form of charitable behavior when the well-being of others becomes a higher priority than self. Leaders could exhibit this fruit by sharing information with employees.

So often we see leaders who keep the truth about a change from employees. The sudden introduction of change occurs as leaders try to effect organizational change before employees have a chance to argue or sabotage the works. Yet, if leaders showed the employees the benefits of change and helped reluctant employees make the transition, the organization would be better off in the long run. I think many leaders do not do this because they either do not understand the change, they do not care about the well-being of the employees, or they don't know enough to realize that there is a better way to operate.

Faithfulness (A Manager Relating to Another Individual)

The next fruit in this sequence is faithfulness, translated from the Greek word *pistis*, which means, assurance, belief, fidelity, and constancy (Strong's word 4102) Paul also uses this term in 1 Timothy 6:11 and 2 Timothy 2:22. *Pistis* occurs 237 times in the New Testament. Only nine times do we translate the word faith from other Greek words. Among these few exceptions, the most notable would be the Greek word *oligopistos*, which means lacking confidence or faith (Strong's word 3640). Faithfulness introduces us to the last group of three fruits. Leaders exhibit this fruit in many ways. To begin with, they are dependable. Employees and superiors both know that they can trust leaders who operate by spiritual principles to complete a task. Employees and superiors know that these leaders stay for the long haul. Deming (2000) included too much mobility of leadership as one of his seven deadly sins for United States leaders. Deming believed that there is too little loyalty among leaders toward their firms. Leaders who live by spiritual principles stay with a firm until God calls them to leave. This allows the firm to grow for the long term. Consider the importance of faithfulness in the mentoring relationship between the leader and the employee.

Leaders who live by spiritual principles are trustworthy. You would not expect to find a spiritually principled leader arrested for embezzlement or insider trading. Employees feel confident that they can talk to a spiritually principled leader and not have personal information revealed to others.

Leaders exhibit this fruit by showing belief in employees. Leaders following spiritual principles know when employees are ready for more responsibility and encourage employees to excel in the new areas. There is a sense of encouragement and equipping that pervades a firm led by spiritually principled leaders.

Meekness (A Manager Relating to Another Individual)

Paul uses the Greek word *prautes* (Strong's word 4240), which comes from the root word *praus* implying controlled discipline as we saw in The Beatitudes. *Prautes* also translates as gentleness. We again see the circular entwining of the essence of the fruits. Leaders exhibit this fruit by controlling their organizational strength and using what is necessary to accomplish the task. No one would accuse a spiritually principled leader of throwing his or her weight around.

Employees would see examples of meekness in the leader during times of correction and rebuke. The meek leader corrects employees when necessary but does so in a way that causes the employee to grow. Unprincipled leaders correct people in hurtful ways that leave emotional scars on the employee.

Other employees can recognize the meek leader by how the leader works with other departments. The meek leader does not threaten or demand, but rather negotiates for cooperation in a way that builds goodwill and seeks peace in the organization.

Temperance or Self-Control (A Manager Relating to Another Individual)

The last fruit is temperance, also called self-control. From the Greek word, *gkrateia*, we translate self-control or temperance (Strong's word 1466). *Egkrateia* comes from the root word *egkrates* meaning self-controlled in appetite or being temperate. I see this character in

a leader who exhibits self-control in actions and words. This ties well into the idea of meekness being controlled discipline.

Leaders exhibiting this fruit would not seek to hoard resources or spend unnecessarily at the end of a budget cycle just to ensure money in the budget for the next cycle, but rather would seek to use resources for the greatest good of the organization. I believe leaders would exhibit this characteristic by being controlled in their personal lives, controlling the amount they eat and drink, and the amount of time spent in any one activity. Thus, a self-controlled leader is balanced in their approach to life.

Employees see the spiritually principled leader as balanced and as someone whom they should emulate, often using the leader as an ideal to which they should emulate. Spiritually principled leaders become the person from whom others seek advice and who demonstrate balance in their own lives.

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