

# **Study Guide for “Lesson on Fruit of the Spirit”**

To be used along with the video of the same name on [www.ChristianfromMuslim.com](http://www.ChristianfromMuslim.com)

## **Lesson Summary and Notes:**

**Quick Summary:** This lesson focuses on the importance of letting the Holy Spirit fill Christians, so that their lives will bring forth fruit. As we actively abide in Christ, letting the Holy Spirit and scripture fill us, we will naturally bring forth the Fruit of the Spirit. By reminding ourselves to do this until it is a habit, we avoid being fruitless.

In this lesson on spiritual fruit, we address the thinking and experiences of those from the Muslim World. Some Muslim and Christian virtues are the same. For example, kindness is valued everywhere in the world. Others virtues, such as hospitality and honor, are valued more highly by Muslims than those that the Bible promotes. This lesson helps you learn to:

- Develop the Fruit of the Spirit in your life
- Learn how Christian and Muslim virtues interact and/or conflict



## **HOW to produce the Fruit of the Spirit**

A number of years ago, Dr. Cynthia was interviewed for a newspaper series on people serving the community. The reporter asked, “How do you live out your faith?” Here is her reply:

Before he left Earth, Jesus gave two main commands to his followers, the Christians: love everyone, and share his gospel – which is the “good news” of forgiveness of sins and new life in his name. He also told us the way to follow his commands, and experience joy in the process: to abide in him as if we were branches and he the vine. This means simply to behold him and let the goodness of God and his Spirit flow into us. We do this by reading and meditating on the Bible, being thankful every day and singing and trusting regardless of the circumstances. Then good deeds come naturally to us – not as an obligation. Learning this “secret” changed my spiritual life.

For Muslims, letting the Holy Spirit bring forth fruit is a foreign concept. They are left to their own effort to obey the many rules that give them hope for paradise.

The Bible calls Christians virtues the *Fruit of the Spirit*.

***“The Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Galatians 5:22,23***

We suggest that Christians memorize this passage, and recite it to themselves often. That will help them focus on what God wants to do in them. In contrast, the world constantly tells us to be led by our flesh. But if we walk in the Spirit, we will not bear the rotten fruit of the flesh, which we read of in Galatians 5:16-21.

### **Reality: a Peach Orchard**

Dr. C and former Muslim Huda take us to a peach orchard for a visual picture of bearing spiritual fruit.

First we visit the orchard when the branches are almost bare. A few have small buds. These buds bring hope that peach blossoms are coming, and that in time the blossoms will develop into fruit.

Likewise, our faith gives us hope. As when we hope for fruit on bare branches, faith tells us that God is real and will work in and for us.

*“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”*

Hebrews 11:1

By allowing the Holy Spirit to live in us, faith brings the Fruit of the Spirit into our lives as the result of God’s presence and power.

### **FRUIT and Examples of it**

Proverbs tells us that the fruit of righteousness is a **tree of life** (Proverbs 11:30). Let us consider each of the life-giving fruit that Galatians encourages us to bear. The video lesson provides examples, here is the background:

#### **LOVE**

Most Muslims come from regions of conflict. Many, many, have experienced the loss of a loved one through war, separation from family, or the hardship of being refugee. Polygamy and some Islamic teachings (like the sayings of Ali which tell men not to spend much time with their families) mean that fathers can seem remote and unloving. The God of Islam, Allah, is distant and often harsh. So it can be difficult for Muslims to believe in the love of a heavenly Father.

Having this background, how can former Muslims “live a life of love” (Ephesians 5:2), and especially forgive and love their enemies? Through the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

#### **Love is the first listed Fruit of the Spirit**

There is a good reason for that. Love is the most important thing in life.

*“...if I have a faith that can move mountains, but **do not have love, I am nothing**. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.”* I Corinthians 13:2,3

That presents two questions:

- How can we avoid being nothing?
- How can we love?

#### **Love is Action**

In the world there is much confusion about what love it. Most people think that it is a feeling. The world tells us that love is a feeling which propels us to action. For example, a lover or a parent might say. “I’d walk a million miles to have you near me.”

Love may indeed be accompanied or strengthened by feeling; but it is much, much more. We can’t just sit in a corner and feel it for it to be real. And even if we are paralyzed we can pray. Love is primarily action. In Ephesians 5:2, Paul tells us to,

*“Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ.” (NLT)*

Christ loved us by his actions. The Apostle John, often known as “Jesus beloved disciple” told us,

*“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ lay down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech, but with actions and in truth.” I John 3:16-18*

*“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. We love because he first loved us.” I John 4:7,8,19*

The passage in the Bible that Christians most associate with real love is **I Corinthians 13:4-8**,

*“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”*

As we allow Jesus’ words and the Holy Spirit to live in us, we will have his love for those around us, no matter who or where they are. In **John 15:5** Jesus told us,

*“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.”*

Not only does love do good, it does not harm others:

*“Love does no harm to its neighbor.  
Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” Romans 13:10*

### **Example: Barbie takes Love around the world**

Bible teacher Barbie has lived in and travelled over much of the world. Rather than take money from sponsors, she supports herself and many others, so that they too can share Jesus’ love around the world.

Barbie has shared the gospel in word and deed with Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Christians and others in America, Europe, India, Latin America, and the Middle East. “People everywhere need love,” she tells us in the video.

Many people have never heard that God loves them. Even Christians can get sad, and need reminding of our heavenly Father’s love. Barbie does not always speak the language of the country that she is in, but she finds some way to share God’s love with people: help, a smile, a tract, a DVD, a gift, or a hug.

### **Loving Enemies**

It is not easy to love some people, especially our enemies. When we can’t love, let’s ask the Holy Spirit to do it through us.

(Note: We talk more about loving enemies in other lessons.)

### **Classic Example: Corrie Ten Boom**

Holland's Corrie Ten Boom and her family ended up in a Nazi concentration camp as a result of saving others from the camps. While suffering there she learned that, "There is no pit that God's love is not deeper still."

Corrie, alone of her family, was later released alive. She struggled not to hate those who had abused and killed her family. What helped her was praying this verse,

*"God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." Romans 5:5*

Through God's Holy Spirit she was able to forgive her enemies. Because of this, after the war when she met some of their tormentors, she was able to speak kindly to them. She told them about God's love and forgiveness, and was an example of it.

(Note: Corrie tells her wonderful story in "The Hiding Place," which has been translated into many languages.)

### **True love loves Jesus**

Shortly before he was crucified, Jesus prayed that the love God the Father has for him would be reflected in our love for Jesus. When we live a life of love, we will love Jesus best, and it will overflow to those around us.

*"I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them." John 17:26*

So, a sign that the Holy Spirit is in us is that we love Jesus.

## **JOY**

### **How can we have Joy?**

The majority of conflicts in the world now are in Muslim countries. It might seem like joy is impossible for many Muslims, because of the overwhelming tragedies they have faced. For example, refugee K, a woman whose father was killed for assisting Americans in Afghanistan. Now her brothers are at risk of execution by the Taliban. How can she have joy?

In hard times, we especially need strength. And Nehemiah tells us that the **Joy of the Lord** is our strength. How does that work?

Look at these examples of what the Bible says bring joy:

1. SEEING JESUS: Jesus comforted his disciples that although he was leaving,

*"I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy."*  
John 16:22

Peter was there when Jesus said that, before the crucifixion. Wouldn't it have been great to be there with Peter when he saw Jesus again, after the resurrection? But on earth, although some Muslims have had a vision of Jesus, we will not see Jesus personally. Fortunately, Peter later said that it was not necessary to see Jesus on earth to share that joy. We can look forward to it some day in the future.

2. BELIEVING without seeing JESUS: Peter told us that we too can have joy,

*“Even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.”* I Peter 1:8

3. THINKING OF HEAVEN: Peter also tells us in this first letter of his, that we have,

*“An inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you... In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief and all kinds of trials.”* I Peter 1:4-6

So you see that our joy is not based on physical blessings or situations. No, **joy is an awareness** of the presence of God, meeting our needs throughout life, and bringing us hope beyond death.

If you are sharing with a Muslim who is suffering, share with them the comfort of knowing that God is always with us and loves us. When the time is right, share with them the heavenly hope that they can have in Christ.

### **Reality: Dance of Joy**

In a reality clip, Iliana is caught in the act of dancing for joy in a church office. Her testimony in another lesson explains her sufferings for being a Christian. Yet when we focus, like she does, on our blessings and the good things God has done, rather than problems, we can experience joy. That joy helps keep life in perspective and gives us strength.

*“This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”*

Nehemiah 8:10

### **Example: Joy of a Married Christian Couple**

Kevin and Dee are Bible teachers who have shared with us in several video lessons. In this one, they not only tell us that joy of the Lord is their strength, they give us an example of it. Even though they have experienced problems and stress, they find ways to practice joy daily. They laugh and make light of problems in life, including their memory loss. By trusting God, they find strength in him. One of the verses they quote is a proverb from the Old Testament of the Bible,

*“A joyful heart is good medicine.”* Proverbs 17:22

*“May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who long for your saving help always say, ‘The Lord is great!’”* Psalm 70:16

*“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”* Philippians 4:4

## **PEACE**

Islam calls itself a “religion of peace.” Others often don’t see it that way because of the kind of peace Islam promises: external. Islam promises the absence of conflict when everyone submits to Islam. Meanwhile, there is *jihad* – struggle with external and internal conflict. Most Muslims have felt the result of those conflicts.

### **EXTERNAL versus INTERNAL Peace**

**External peace.** Conflicts are part of life. This is especially true in the Islamic World, where sectarian conflicts have led to perpetual violence. Many immigrants to the West have gruesome memories. A

significant number have suffered PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder; more on this in another lesson). External peace for them is often only a dream.

**Internal peace.** Beyond coming from areas lacking peace, Muslims must serve a religious system which, despite its name, does not bring internal peace. The most important peace, *Peace with God*, does not come through our good deeds or Islamic ritual.

### **Internal Peace Example: Huda before and after knowing Jesus Christ**

**Emptiness of Islamic Rituals.** In the video Huda tells us that when she was a Muslim, she religiously practiced the Islamic rituals, like praying and fasting, trying to please God through them. But no matter how hard she tried, she felt empty. She could not find peace through these practices. She felt like a slave to God. Other former Muslims say the same.

**Peace of Christ.** Huda tells us that her first experiences visiting Christian churches filled her with a sense of peace, even before she understood the gospel. The Holy Spirit used this peace to draw her to Jesus. Now, as a Christian, she sees God as her Father, not her slave master.

In Jesus' time, the Jews were burdened with many laws and rituals – not only those of Moses, but other, excessive ones added by the religious leaders. In this way, Judaism resembled Islam. Ordinary people, who had to struggle to survive, couldn't keep up with the religious requirements. They were overburdened and felt like failures. Their religion was discouraging them.

Jesus had compassion on the overburdened faithful of his day. He called out to them in Matthew 11:28, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."*

Muslims today are also under bondage to a demanding system of laws. Jesus wants them to experience his rest. He brings us three kinds of peace.

#### **Three Kinds of Peace** through Jesus:

1. **Peace with God**
2. **Peace with ourselves**
3. **Peace with others**

**PEACE with GOD:** This is the most important peace in the world.

*"We have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*  
Romans 5:1

Having peace with God means that our sins are forgiven, we have fellowship with him, and will live with him and other believers forever in heaven. We gain this by accepting Jesus' punishment in our place for our sins. Then we become part of God's eternal family. (John 3:16; see also *Gospel video Tract for Muslims: the Path of the Prophets*)

**PEACE with OURSELVES:** Even as Christians we can struggle to find inner peace.

Every day we have problems. In addition, when sharing the gospel with Muslims, we come against major strongholds and receive intense spiritual warfare.

Some of the practices and thoughts that have helped renew and regenerate us, might help you too. With greater peace you can better fulfill whatever purpose God has given you. (Psalm 13:1,2, Galatians 5:22, John 14:27)

Brothers and sisters, if you have been adopted into God's family, you have **peace with God**. **Meditating on this brings internal peace** and helps you find peace with others.

*“You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you,  
all whose **thoughts are fixed on you!**”* Isaiah 26:3 (NLT)

The night of the **Last Supper** with his disciples, Jesus knew that he would soon be arrested. He knew that this would come as a great surprise to his dear disciples. It had been difficult for them to learn that Jesus was not going to be the kind of messiah that they wanted. They wanted an earthly king. They were struggling to understand this.

Even though Jesus had warned them, they could not conceive of what was going to happen next: Jesus would be condemned as a criminal, tortured, and crucified until he died. Then they would be without him – until he arose again on Easter Sunday. Jesus foresaw the extreme distress that it would cause his followers, as indeed it did. Even hearing him talk about it distressed them.

Jesus could have thought only of what he would suffer. But he was not focused on himself. In order to lessen the pain of his followers he shared a beautiful **sermon of comfort** with them. The Apostle John recorded it in John chapters 14-16. Jesus told them,

*“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid...  
the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father...  
**I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.**”*

John 14:27 & 16:27,28,33

### **Internal Peace: through Knowledge**

In this message, Jesus tells we can have peace because God the Father loves us, and the Holy Spirit will be with us. Knowing this gives us peace.

(Note: Muslim apologists distort this passage. They take a few verses out of context to try to show that Jesus prophesied Mohammed instead of the Holy Spirit. In addition to the context of the words surrounding what they extract, we must consider the context Jesus of Jesus comforting his disciples before their life's major crisis. Mohammed coming centuries later would not comfort their present. So claims these Muslim claims fall apart in two ways: the spirit of the passage's message, and truth of the passage's words.)

### **Internal Peace: through Attitude**

Our attitude goes a long way toward giving us peace. In fact, to a large degree we can choose to have peace. We do this by letting the Holy Spirit bring about peace in us. How? **By practicing thought control**. This can't be over-emphasized.

*“Cast your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”* 1 Peter 5:7

At all times, especially during times of sorrow or distress, we must push out the unhappy thoughts which pull us down, and give them to God. This is not always easy. At times it feels like a physical battle to push out negative thoughts and feelings, and hand them to God.

Then, we replace the negative thoughts with positive thoughts. The Apostle Paul tells us,

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”*

Philippians 4:6-9

*“... peace as you trust in him...”* Romans 15:13

Science has shown that our thoughts release chemicals through our nervous system. Anxious thoughts release stressful chemicals. Positive thoughts release chemicals which help our bodies feel at peace.

If our minds are full of thankful, positive thoughts about the Lord and his goodness, there will be less space for sad and obsessive thoughts. As a famous saying tells us,

*“Where you plant a rose, a thistle cannot grow.”*

**PEACE with OTHERS:** When we have peace with God and our self, it can more easily flow out of us into peace with others. (Hebrews 12:14)

*“As far as depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”* Romans 12:18

## **PEACE and PURPOSE**

Dr. C’s view of life is **Peace and Purpose**. She shares with us how ideally this should be true for everyone, especially Christians. First, we have the three kinds of peace described above.

### **Reality: Peace and Purpose in New York City**

While at a conference connected with the United Nations, Dr. C shot this video out of her hotel window. Notice the view: from a position high above the street, we can see the entrance to the United Nations building, the East River, and the many buildings towering around it. We sense that the world’s leaders are within reach; yet also the nameless crowds of Manhattan.

Dr. C uses this perspective to remind us that we can have Peace with God, ourselves, and others. In such peace is the hope of bringing peace between nations.

*“When the Lord takes pleasure in anyone’s way,  
he causes their enemies to make peace with them.”* Proverbs 16:7

She also tells us that everyone in the great city of New York – and everywhere in the world – has a purpose. You too!



### **Everyone has a Purpose.**

Have you wondered, "Now that I'm saved, why did God leave me here – an imperfect creature in this fallen world? Why didn't he take me straight to heaven?"

In John 17, Jesus said that he wants us with him in heaven to share his glory, but he sends us out. That is why we are still here! Just as he was sent to earth, for a purpose, so are we. He left us to do the good works he had in mind when he created us. And meanwhile, he will work to develop Christ's image in us. (Ephesians 2:10, Romans 8:29)

God has a **Purpose** for each person on this earth, regardless of their status. No one is left out. No one is too unimportant, or too important, for God to notice and care about. Whatever our talents, experiences, or failings, the Lord has a special way for us to serve him.

**What is your purpose?** Well, Jesus gave us two primary instructions before he left earth:

1. **Love** everyone
2. **Share the good news of** his kingdom and salvation in his name

So your Purpose should fit within that framework. It would be whatever God has called you to do – determined between you and him. Your purpose includes obvious everyday things, like doing your job well, and caring for your family. But it also includes whatever unique spiritual gift and calling you have, to promote God's kingdom on earth.

We hope that you feel called to touch everyone around you with love or the gospel, in word and deed. We believe some of you will even pursue Muslims, or other people groups that are unfamiliar with the gospel. We encourage you to!

### **BALANCING Peace and Purpose**

This philosophy of Peace and Purpose brings life amazing clarity and simplicity. Everything in our lives should further our Peace or our Purpose

Our peace in this sense includes anything that builds us up and makes us more capable of accomplishing our purpose. Hobbies, rest, and recreations are included, just as long as they don't take over our life.

When we live according to Peace and Purpose, we make practical applications of Jesus' saying, "If your hand offends you, cut it off." With this philosophy of life, we ask ourselves:

#### **If something doesn't contribute to either my peace or purpose, am I why doing it?**

For example, Dr. C's son asked, "Does Peace and Purpose mean that I can't play video games?" She replied, "No. If playing makes you more able for your purpose, it is good. But if it puts you in a bad mood or becomes an obsession, it is not."

What might need to be cut out? Whatever within our control brings out negative emotions or sins, such as lust, covetous, fear, sadness, anger, doubt, or obsession. Common examples might include certain types of music, books, TV/movies, websites, social networking and connections, events, sports, even some friendships. What we cut out might actually be something good; but if it doesn't bring us peace, or help us accomplish our general or specific purposes as a Christian? Cut it out!

In practice, this outlook can simplify your life: simplicity contributes to your peace, which in turn contributes to your purpose, and so on.

## PATIENCE

### **Patience means Wait!**

Peace can help us have patience. Most of us find waiting a challenge. If we want patience, we want it now! Patience gives us endurance.

“Everything takes longer than it takes,” is a famous saying from South America. This proverb is one of Dr. C’s favorites. We may think that we can finish something in a certain time, but difficulties and delays are likely. Realizing that helps us to be patient.

Our cultures influence the kinds of things that are difficult for us to be patient with.

**Example: American Businessman in an Arab country.** In the West we say, “Time is money.” Mr. X moved to a Muslim country to be a light for the gospel and to do business. He explained that part of his adjustment was to accept reduced efficiency. Rather than simply do business, every visit included tea and friendly discussion before getting down to business. Not to would be rude in the local culture.

### **Impatience can cost**

For example, when a \$400 gift card didn’t work, the Middle Eastern man who had bought it got angry and threw it away, saying, “Forget about it!” rather than checking to find out what had happened. The recipient of the gift was, to say the least, not pleased, because they got nothing. This was rude in American culture.

“*Insah!* Forget about it!” can characterize other activities. Some don’t matter; but it can be significant when, rather than taking time to work things out, relationships or jobs are abandoned.

Certainly, such actions are not isolated to Muslims. We know of a strong Christian couple that openly admitted that they wouldn’t ask God for patience, because it might bring on trials. Rather than trust God to aid them, they became very impatient. Despite their deep faith and desire to serve God, outbursts and quarrels became common.

### **Example: Patience from Ireland to Africa**

Sister in the Lord Eithne shares with us on video what God has done in her life. Accomplishing her life’s work took much time and dedication. Through that, and now working with people who are not used to time-oriented Western ways, she has learned the value of **Patience and Faithfulness**.

Eithne’s life’s journey began in a small town in Ireland where there were not many opportunities. Yet, through joys and sorrow, she moved on to bring health care to remote regions of Africa, and other places around the world.

As a young woman Eithne wanted to become a nurse, but her father wanted her to be a teacher. After studying nursing in Dublin she moved to America. There she married, divorced, and then found Jesus. She started teaching healthcare, and as a result, ended up fulfilling both her and her father’s dreams!

Now with a master’s degree in nursing, Eithne teaches health care around the world, from Albania to Thailand and beyond. She even helped start a nursing school in rural Kenya, and wrote their curriculum. Remote though it is, that school has been recognized as the best nursing school in Kenya.

What helps us to be patient is trusting God's timing. Eithne's life Bible passage is all about trust:

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths." Proverbs 3:5,6 (NKJV)*

Eithne feels primarily called to serve the Lord through healthcare. She heads Healthcare Christian Fellowship, USA, and works with them internationally as well. Whenever she works in Muslim areas, Eithne shares the gospel with Muslims, using *The Path of the Prophets*.

(Note: See the *Lesson on the Gospel for Muslims: the Path of the Prophets*, and the *Gospel Video Tract for Muslims*).

**Eithne has needed Patience** with the processes of getting things done in another culture: the systems, communication means, and people who have different educational levels and work ethic. At times it has been very trying. But patience has paid off.

What might you need patience for?

- **A Dream** to be fulfilled, like Eithne's, or a project
- **Something** you want
  - for example Abraham's promised son (Genesis 17)
  - an item you must work to get
  - something you want to happen
- **Education**
- **Interruptions**
- **Endurance** of a difficult situation
  - like Joseph in prison (Genesis 41)
  - like Job suffering pain
- **Someone else**
  - to finish talking or doing something that you want to do
  - learning to take turns
- **Revenge**
  - Growing out of desert tribalism, some Muslim cultures consider it a matter of honor to avenge. It may even be seen as a sign of weakness or lack of devotion if one does not. That may be your culture, but it is not God's culture.
  - God wants us to wait for his justice: either directly, or through legal authorities. He does not want his children's hands guilty of blood. He does not want our societies to decline into feuds.
  - In Romans 12:19 Paul says,

*"Do not take revenge my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written, 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay says the Lord.'"*

### **FAITHFULNESS**

**Eithne has needed to be Faithful** to long term projects, like starting the nursing school, and improving it until it became the best in the country. She has faithfully assisted American Ethnic Ministries and other ministries at no charge for decades.

When training to be a physician Dr. C was told, "Being a professional means doing your work **whether you feel like it or not.**" That is faithfulness.

We might not feel well. We might not feel like God is with us. But as we grow in the Lord we will become faithful, like Jesus, regardless of how we feel.

(Note: We talk about God's faithfulness in the video and study guide for *Lesson on Easter: the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus.*)

Christian faithfulness includes things like:

- **faith** – keep believing when times get too bad, or too good
- keeping a consistent **spiritual walk** with God (prayer, Bible, worship, fellowship)
- doing our consistent **best** in our daily work
- keeping to **commitments**
- spending time with our children and **family**, whether we feel like it or not
- keeping only to our one **spouse**
- being a good **friend and community** member
- always being ready to **share what we know of God**, and what he has done for us

Coming out of a polygamous culture, like Islam's, the concept of **sexual faithfulness** can be a challenge. The main sexual sin in Islam is for a man to have a sexual relationship with a woman who is under the authority of another Muslim man: a husband, father, or brother. Premarital and extramarital sexual relationships are acceptable for Muslim men, if they are not violating another Muslim man's rights. Sex is permitted with: infidel our outcast women (willing or not), willing divorced Muslim women, unmarried women whose fathers permit it for a few (misyar), or Shiite temporary marriage.

We have found that it is difficult for former Muslims to exchange the idea that **marriage** is a business contract, as it is in Islam, for it being a sacrament. This is true not only with men, but also for women. They have had their brains programed from childhood to believe that a permanent marriage is desirable, but not guaranteed.

In Islam, it is totally acceptable for men to exchange one wife for another, or add additional wives up to four, since the Qur'an approves of it. This means their eyes can always be open for another marriage partner.

Women cannot refuse to be divorced, but are allowed to remarry after divorce. As a result, many Muslim women subconsciously believe that their value lies in their ability to attract men.

(Note: See more about this in our lessons on "Islam and Women" and "Should Christians Marry Muslims?")

Keeping other **commitments** can be a challenge in any culture, especially Muslim. There is a tendency to get angry or frustrated if things are more difficult than expected, for example if someone is difficult to work with, or if things are not turning out well. We need to struggle against the desire to give up, or "throw in the towel" as American say.

### Example: Christian life not Easy

We have seen Muslims imagine that life will be easier if they become Christians. God will be pleased with them, they think, so spiritual and material blessings will follow. When they discover that is not totally the case, they are tempted to abandon the faith. Those of us sharing with them should be aware of this temptation. We should explain that Christians are blessed, but an easy life is not guaranteed. We must be faithful regardless.

### **What helps us be Faithful?**

When tempted to quit a commitment, we must ask God to fill us with his Spirit to help us endure and be faithful.

**Example: “Eyes on the prize.”** This saying encourages us to put up with hardships in order to accomplish our goal. Dr. C remembers a period when she needed to work with a difficult group of people. She was tempted to give up. But she kept reminding herself that with them she could reach the goal. So she took the abuse, and as a result succeeded.

**Example: Jesus is our best example in faithfulness.** He endured the cross, despising its shame, because he wanted to accomplish the goal of saving us. Several placed in the New Testament we are told to keep our eyes on him to help us be faithful. (Hebrews 12:2)

We might feel like our sacrifice in faithfulness goes unnoticed, but God notices. He will reward us for it. And meanwhile, you might be surprised that others notice your faithfulness. (Hebrews 6:10, Matthew 5:16)

*“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”* I Corinthians 15:58

## **KINDNESS and GOODNESS**

### **Kindness**

Most of us have a feeling for what kindness is, and like receiving it. The Bible tells us how to live out kindness: caring about others, doing good to them, honoring them, and forgiving them.

Muslim cultures generally excel at hospitality, and often at generosity as well. It reflects on their honor. Hospitality falls far short in Western cultures. An awareness of this difference will help Western Christians be more hospitable and generous with their Muslim connections, and will help Muslim background people not feel slighted by simpler offerings of their Christian friends.

Many of us believe that we deserve better from life and other people. We feel justified in growling at them, and demanding they do things for us. Or if they don't, we become “passive aggressive,” pouting and withholding even basic courtesies. Little by little, this resentment makes us into a worse person than the ones we resent. The attitude evolves into a habit that spills onto everyone that we meet. At last, no one will want to be near us.

Most unkind people, those that we would call “mean” in English, feel that they have been treated unfairly. Criminals too. Maybe they have received little kindness, and either don't know how to or don't want to give it.

This world is not fair. This is why, when we share the gospel for Muslims we emphasize that we are not in paradise. We will never be treated right all the time, even by those closest to us.

“If we don't forgive people, we will have no one in our lives,” Dr. C told her children as they were growing up. What matters is how we react to being treated unfairly. With the Holy Spirit's help, we can bear the fruit of kindness even when mistreated.

We are not saying that Christians should not tell people that they are mistreating us. They need that feedback. They might not even know that they are doing it. But we need to tell them in a considerate way that fulfills these verses,

*“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.”*  
Ephesians 4:32

*“In humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”*  
Philippians 2:3,4

*“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”*  
Matthew 7:12

### **Goodness**

Kindness then, does good for others. Goodness refrains from doing “unkind” things: like gossip, putting people down, being harsh and cruel, or keeping them from what would make them happy. It avoids evil. It thinks the best and wants the best for people. Perhaps this verse illustrates it well,

*“... act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.”* Micah 6:8

**Example: Goodness in the Family.** Another sister in Christ, Robyn, explains in the video how the Lord taught her to show kindness and mercy to someone dear to her.

### **GENTLENESS**

Most of us like gentleness in others. It can make us feel relaxed, and as if someone cares for us, the way our mother did.

Stereotypes aside, gentleness is a desirable trait for both men and women. Not only are women in the Bible honored for being gentle, but men as well.

**Example: Apostle Paul’s Gentleness.** Describing his own leadership in Thessalonica the Apostle Paul said,

*“We were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.”* I Thessalonians 2:7

He was illustrating what Proverbs 16:21 tells us: that pleasant, sweet or gracious words encourage learning.

To most of the people in the Greek city of Thessalonica, the new way of life that Paul and Timothy taught was dramatically different from what they knew in pagan religions and Judaism. **Gentleness was a tool** that the missionary team used to make their teaching more powerful.

Timothy was originally taught the Bible by his mother and grandmother. Perhaps their style was gentle, because he was certainly a good learner. His mother and grandmother prepared him to follow Paul as a powerful leader of the early church. (Acts 16:1-3; II Timothy 1:5 & 3:15)

In Philippians 4:5, Timothy and Paul tell us to let our *“gentleness be evident to all,”* as an important sign that the Lord is with us.

### **Meekness**

Gentleness in the Galatians fruit passage has also be translated “meekness.” Meekness is a word not used much or understood in modern English. When used, it has come to mean weakness. But weakness is not the true meaning of the word. It is closer to, “strength under control.”

For example, a horse that has been tamed is “meeked.” It does not mean that the horse is weak. It means that it has been trained to control its strength.

There are many kinds of strength: physical, intellectual, financial, influential, political, and others. Looking at gentleness from the meekness perspective, we can see that it means using our strength carefully. It is for the good of others, as well as ourselves, as the Bible tells us in many places.

So, in contrast to the world’s message, where greater strength is for personal success and “survival of the fittest,” we should discipline our strength, to use it wisely and gently.

## **SELF-CONTROL**

The last fruit listed in Galatians is self-control. As you now see, it is related to other fruits, especially patience and gentleness. The video lesson does not cover this topic. It is very important, so we will discuss here.

### **Overreacting**

“Wait while I overreact!” is a funny American Tee-shirt slogan. We probably all know people who lose self-control and overreact. Movies and reality shows turn it into comedy. But in real life, it is not good. God wants us to have self-control.

“Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water!” and “Don’t cut off your nose to spite your face!” are sayings which encourage us not to overreact. Sometimes we overreact as a punishment to someone else, but in the long run it hurts us more.

### **Reacting without thought**

Some people make their decisions as a knee-jerk reaction against what they have been told to do, without thinking what would be the best decision. This might be an easy way to make a decision, but it is not the right way. For example, “My father says do X, so I will do Y!”

It is typical for teenagers to do decide this way. In societies where people are under rigid control, like Islam’s, there can also be a tendency to rebel and make decisions this way. But self-control is the better way.

### **For example:**

- Muslims out of their country for school or vacation do things they wouldn’t at home.
- Educated Muslim women, finally with a little power over their previously male-dominated destinies, make poor choices by reaction against men’s wishes.
- Even the decision to become a “Christian” can be a reaction to Islamic control.

None of these are good decisions.

### **Swearing, foul language, cursing, and profanity**

When we are hit physically, or shocked, it is natural to exclaim. Self-control keeps our exclamations from being unclean or profane. In America, the younger generations now sadly use four letter sexual words not only in anger, but in general speech. Some people use the Lord’s name in vain.

Arabic curses tend to be less sexually vulgar, but can be devastating, like, “Allah cursed you,” and even “Allah take your life!” These express bad wishes from the heart, and use the Arabic name of God in vain.

### **Verbal abuse**

Some people insult and belittle others – family members, friends, or strangers. This can be done in arguments, but also as a tool to control, suppress, or keep others from expressing an opinion. “You cow,” is a common Arabic insult.

“Verbal abuse” is a term for ongoing insults and belittling. It creates a difficult home environment. Children become anxious to leave. Adults want divorce.

### **Ridicule**

Ridicule is another form of abusive speech. It puts others down, making them look stupid or foolish. Some use it to make fun of others and laugh at them. This is sadly common in the Middle East, where it takes a style different from the West. Practical jokes involving lies and situations to trick someone and make them look naïve or foolish are not uncommon.

Enduring ridicule. In a shame and honor culture, ridicule is especially damaging. It takes much self-control to neither ridicule nor react to ridicule.

When we are ridiculed, let’s not make a wrong choice because of it, or react with vengeance. People might be using ridicule to manipulate us into a response that they want from us. It might be to get us to do something that we would not do if they simply asked us. They might be provoking us to do a bad thing. It might be what is called “a dare.”

If we are ridiculed for something we cannot help, like being short, or for being a Christian, we must remember that God made us and loves us as we are. It is his opinion that matters. We don’t need to prove ourselves to anyone else. We must also refrain from responding to ridicule with ridicule or curses.

Noah endured a hundred years of ridicule while he obeyed God and built the ark. As a result, God saved him. If we endure ridicule, God notices and is pleased.

### **All these above ways of speaking are ungodly**

If they are your habit, ask the Lord to help you overcome them. Memorize these verses to remind yourself that the Bible says,

*“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths,  
but only what is helpful for building others up.”* Ephesians 4:29

*“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God,  
for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”* Exodus 20:7

### **Passion vs. Self-control**

Some Muslim cultures value what they consider to be “passion.” If someone angers easily it may be viewed as passionate dedication – a virtue implying truth, honor, and righteousness. Christians need to be careful not to confuse the reaction with the message or situation.

Examples of outbursts confused for righteous passion:

- **hostility** towards another man who compliments his sister or mother, meaning that the women are pure.
  - For example, a relatively mild-mannered Middle Eastern man told us many times, “If a man says my sister is pretty, I’ll smash his face!”



- *(Note: This is confusing to Westerners who see compliments as a good thing. But culturally to many Muslims and other Middle Easterners, that someone would dare to compliment the appearance of, and at times even ask about, a man's female relatives is offensive.)*
- **anger** at a wife or daughter, beating her out of jealousy, or because she has displeased him, being seen as “love”
- **violence** against or killing someone who leaves Islam, or speaks against it, being seen as righteous indignation
- **yelling** by the sheikh in a *khutbah* (Muslim sermon), or in a debate between Muslims and non-Muslims, being taken by Muslims to mean that his words are true, even if they are nonsense or wrong. (Christians can do this too.)

Many of us would rather control others than ourselves. Without self-control, we blame others for our wrongs. Shame can also bring blame. The “blame game” is well-recognized in Muslim cultures, as its members, and experts testify. In this game, both the winners and losers lose.

**Example: Self-control or Blame game?** An imam at a large American mosque told Dr. C that it was a woman's sin if a man lusted for her. The blame was hers, not his.

- This unfortunate view produces “**grooming squads**” of Muslim men. Since women are blamed for inciting lust, men feel justified to gang rape “immodest” women.  
(Note: See also the study guide and *Lesson on Women in Islam*.)
- Because this crime has become common in Muslim areas of Europe, **refugees** are losing the welcome that they need.
- Men who would not be punished for it overseas are facing unexpected imprisonment in the West.

Christians also might disapprove of certain ways of dressing or acting, or things said against us. But we must control ourselves. We cannot blame others to justify our own bad behavior.

**Example: Offensive speech.**

Self-control/blame issues also emerge with Freedom of Speech. “Everyone has a right to their opinion as long as they are not provoking others,” a Muslim told to Dr. C. This is a common example of what Muslims are telling the West.

In attempt to get us to side with them and surrender Freedom of Expression, they will also say that no one should insult any prophet, even Jesus. Perhaps on the surface this sounds reasonable; but does it mean that “passionate” people, those without self-control, should make the rules? That the blame for rioting and violence lies with the person who spoke, not with the one who reacted with violence?

If you are Islamic background, you might also have believed that the fault is the person's that gave the offense. We are not saying that it is good to offend people. But if someone riots or kills because they were offended, the sin is theirs. The Bible teaches that each person is responsible for their own thoughts and actions.

Offending should only be done for an important reason. If we are aware that we will be offending by saying or doing something, we should be certain that the Lord leads us to do it. Of course, the main offense that we cannot forsake is that of the cross.

In the West, we must hold onto Freedom of Expression. We cannot surrender it because our free speech might offend Muslims or atheists. Otherwise, Christians will become unable to share the gospel and other truths, as they are in Muslim countries. Even in Western culture, Christians have had to endure all kinds of insults because of freedom of expression. Muslims must learn to do likewise.

### **The city wall analogy:**

*“Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.” Proverbs 25:28*

This proverb is so instructive. It provides a good illustration of **leaking out** what is inside. For example, we might visualize someone’s anger or lust leaking out of them.

### **Walls Keep in**

If we lash out in pride, we damage relationships, in anger we become harsh or violent, in lust we become thieves or rapists. These behaviors will not accomplish common goals, like to be loved, respected or successful.

### **Walls Keep out**

Walls also do the reverse: keep evil out. During the Iron Age, when this proverb was written, a city’s walls protected the people inside. If the walls were broken, enemies could enter the city and rob or attack it.

Without self-control we let bad inside. In the worst case, bitterness and negative spiritual forces enter. So, self-control, not only **keeps bad from going** out of us, but also **keeps bad from coming** into us.

### **Self-control learns**

Self-control means being open to listen and learn from others: not to be rigid and willful. Most people think that a strong person is one who pushes to have their own way. But actually, **strength is being willing to follow** another person’s lead when they are right.

People who always demand their own way are missing out on opportunities to learn. By listening to other’s ideas we can “think outside the box” to find new and better solutions.

### **Would you like to have more self-control? Here’s how:**

- **abide** in Christ and let his word fill you
- **pray** for the Holy Spirit to help you bear this fruit
- **stop** for a moment to think and pray before you react or
- **take time out** where you can be alone, to consider the situation and pray
- ask for a *do-over* if you “blow it” and act out badly. A do-over is a conscious attempt to repair a situation. It means admitting that you were wrong, and are sorry. You ask for a chance to respond better to the situation .

(Note: We have seen this used, and it works!)

As new Christians, Muslims and others, should examine themselves in the light of self-control. It’s an often unrecognized **sign of greatness to be able to control ourselves**. Through discipline we can become a sharp tool to accomplish an important goal. Simply obeying our impulses to satisfy fleshly desires and pride, or blaming others will not advance us to a goal.

## **INSPECTING FRUIT**

Reviewing Galatians 5:22,23, and meditating about these fruit, or virtues, shows each of us how short of perfection we fall. It will humble us. Perhaps it will motivate us to spend more time with the Lord, memorizing the Bible, and letting the Holy Spirit bring forth fruit in our lives.

As Jesus told us in Matthew 7:15-20, inspecting fruit also helps us know which leaders to follow.

(Note: See study guide and *Lesson on What Makes a Prophet?*)

## **FRUIT THAT LASTS**

**Reality: Harvesting Peaches.** In the video, Dr. C shows us peaches being harvested. Special equipment is used to pick the fruit and get it to consumers as soon as possible.

**Bearing Fruit that Lasts.** Here is encouragement about your Fruit of the Spirit – it lasts! Peaches must reach the markets shortly after they are harvested or they will spoil. In contrast, Jesus helps us bear fruit that will last! (John 15:5,16)

Jesus tells us to love. Love, doing good and sharing his message, will bring fruit that lasts. As a result, we are inspired to hope for Jesus' heavenly greeting,

*"Well done, good and faithful servant."* Matthew 25:23

The hope of his warm greeting, and knowing that we have fulfilled our purpose on earth, encourages us to faithfully keep going when times are difficult.

## **LIVING in the SPIRIT**

**Practicing the Presence of God.** Brother Lawrence of 17<sup>th</sup> century France wrote the classic book with this title. In it he explains how he practiced the presence of God in his life while doing simple and laborious daily tasks around his monastery. This is a form of living in the Spirit, in constant communication with God. We too can live in awareness of the presence of God with us.

(Note: *Practicing the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence, can be downloaded free over the internet.)

In this video segment, our dear ministry sister Joanna, now in heaven with Jesus, explains to new believer Huda how to practice the presence of God with **Joy**.

Joanna lived for God. Through prayer and awareness, Joanna brought the Lord into her daily life. She memorized scriptures and recited them to herself throughout the day. Big decisions were made in consultation with God through prayer and the scriptures. Joanna did outreaches went on mission trips overseas, but also testified of God's love wherever she went around town. As she tells Huda on screen, even Joanna's simple, everyday tasks were shared with the Lord and submitted to his guidance.

(Note: See also our other video lessons and study guides related to Christian practices and living.)

### **Scripture References for this Lesson:**

II Corinthians 5:17

Galatians 5:16-23

Hebrews 11:1,6 & 12:14 & 6:10

Ephesians 2:10 & 4:32 & 5:2

I Corinthians 2:16 & 13:2,3,4-8, 13 & 15:58

Proverbs 3:5,6 & 11:30 & 16:7,21 & 17:22 & 25:28

Luke 6:45

I John 4:7,8,19 & 3:16-18

Genesis chapters 17 & 41

Romans 5:1,5 & 12:18,19,21 & 13:10 & 15:13

Nehemiah 8:10

Psalms 13:1, 2 & 70:16

Matthew 7:12 & 11:28 & 28:19,18,20 & 6:9-13 & 5:16 & 25:23  
Isaiah 26:3  
I Peter 5:7 & 1:4-6,8  
John 3:16 & 14:27 & 15:5,12,10,11,16 & 16:22, 27,28,33 & 17:24,20,18,17,26  
James 2:12,13  
Philippians 2:3,4 & 4:5-9  
I Thessalonians 2:7  
II Timothy 1:5 & 3:15  
Hebrews 11:1, & 2:12,14 & 6:10

### **Study Questions:**

1. Fruit of the Spirit. Before this lesson had you heard of the *Fruit of the Spirit*?
  - Do you plan to memorize Galatians 5:22,23?
  - Honestly, at this point how much fruit of the Spirit do you see in your life?
  - How do you think you can produce the Fruit of the Spirit? (see John 15:5 for help)
  - What role do you think that the Fruit of the Spirit plays in Christian life?
  - Jesus said, “By their fruits you will know them” about spiritual leaders.
    - Do the spiritual leaders you are following bear Fruit of the Spirit?
    - What about the leaders of your religious group?
    - Your country?
2. Regarding Muslim customs related to the Fruit of the Spirit:
  - Were you familiar with these different views of virtues that Muslims have?
  - Which ones particularly struck you?
  - If you are Muslim background:
    - how does the concept of Fruit of the Spirit fit with ideas of Islam?
    - do you feel that the Muslim views and behaviors were accurately described here?
    - were you offended by their description?
    - what do you think was the point of mentioning them?
    - did it help you reflect on the differences between what you might have known, and the way the Bible teaches?
  - How might you see these cultural influences as impacting:
    - How you personally develop fruit in your life?
    - How you discuss Christianity with a Muslim?
    - How you might try to disciple a former Muslim in bearing fruit?
3. Love. What does the Bible say is the greatest fruit? (1 Corinthians 13:13, Matthew 22:37-40)
  - World-traveler Barbie tells us that everyone around the world needs love. Might the expression of it however be different according to cultures?
  - Whom do you find easy to love?
  - Whom do you find difficult to love?
  - What are some new ways that you could live a life of love?
4. Joy. What makes you stronger: sad thoughts or joyful thoughts?
  - Is there a difference between happiness and joy?
  - After reviewing the scriptures in the study guide, does the Bible teach that Christians should usually be joyful, focused on their blessings? or sad, always focused on their problems and failures?
  - How can we live in joy in the midst of the trials of life, in an unhappy world?

5. Peace. Did the rituals of Islam bring peace to Huda's heart?

- What thoughts bring peace to your heart?
- One of the first things that struck Huda about Christianity was a feeling of peace she experienced in visiting churches. Are there any places that the Holy Spirit uses to bring you a sense of peace?
- What are the three kinds of peace we describe in this lesson? Do you think that's right? (see Roman 5:1 & 12:18; Psalm 131:2)
- Do you agree that peace with God can flow into the other kinds of peace?

6. Peace and Purpose. Dr. C believes that the Christian life can be summed up as Peace and Purpose.

- What do you think of this philosophy of life?
- What parts of purpose would be the same for all Christians?
- Do you think that God has a purpose for you? (see John 17:18, Ephesians 2:10)
  - What might that be?
- Dr. C feels that knowing about Peace and Purpose can simplify your life, because anything we allow in to our life should contribute to one of the three kinds of peace, or our purpose.
  - She says that we should cut out whatever we can that negatively impacts us: tempts us to sin, depresses us, etc.
  - **What things negatively impact you**, are not essential, and could be cut out of your life to increase your Peace and help Purpose?

7. Patience. We say some forms of patience are cultural. Some are not.

- Have you ever worked with someone from a culture that values relationship and hospitality or other virtue more than time?
  - How did you relate to it?
- How do you think that the Holy Spirit could give you more patience?
- Is your need for patience more related to situations in life or people around you?
- Dr. C mentioned devout Christians who refused to pray for patience because they thought life would become more trying.
  - Do you think this is living according to the Spirit?
  - What fears might be keeping you from bearing this or other fruit?

8. Faithfulness. Do you think that what they taught about professionalism in Dr. C's medical school is a good description of faithfulness?

- What areas of faithfulness are relatively easy for you?
- What areas of faithfulness are a challenge for you? (You do not need to share these with your study group.)
- Pray for God to strengthen you to be faithful.

9. Kindness, Goodness.

- What aspects of kindness and goodness do you admire?
  - Do you think you are kind and good in some areas?
  - How might you make progress in being kind and good?
- The study guide says that life is unfair. Unkind and evil people often have a sense of being treated unfairly, and have reacted in a negative way.
  - Do you feel that you have been treated unfairly?
  - Have you suffered from unkind or evil people?
  - How can we keep the way we have been treated from making us bitter and unkind?
  - How can we help unkind and evil people become better?

10. Gentleness. The study guide states that gentleness is strength under control.

- What are your strengths?
  - Have you brought them under control?
  - Do you use them to help others?
- Do you agree that gentleness helps people learn?
  - How might knowing this help you teach others around you?
    - in your family, at your job, at your church

10. Self-control. In this study guide discuss many areas of life which require self-control. If needed, review the section and answer:

- Which forms of self-control are easy for you?
- Which do you struggle with?
- Do you feel that you are suffering from someone else's lack of self-control?
  - If how, how do you react to it?
  - Might you react better?
- Did any of the suggestions mentioned seem helpful?

11. Practicing the Presence of God.

- Is God with us at all times, or only if we think that he is?
- Do you understand the idea of living as if you are in God's presence?
- Do you feel that Joanna explains well how to "practice the presence of God" to Huda?
- Do you see a possible relationship in your life between practicing the presence of God and bearing more fruit?

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